

A BOOK OF THE  
COUNTRY AND  
THE GARDEN



H·M·BATSON



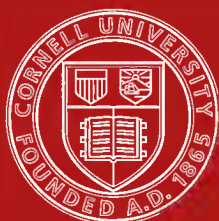
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A BOOK OF THE COUNTRY  
AND THE GARDEN

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

DARK : A TALE OF THE DOWN COUNTRY

ADAM THE GARDENER

THE EARTH CHILDREN

IN CONJUNCTION WITH E. D. ROSS

A COMMENTARY ON THE RUBA'İYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM





THE WILD GARDEN IN JUNE

# A BOOK OF THE COUNTRY AND THE GARDEN

BY

H. M. BATSON

WITH 72 ILLUSTRATIONS BY

F. CARRUTHERS GOULD AND A. C. GOULD

METHUEN & CO.  
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. . . Redit agricolis labor actus in orbem,  
Atque in se sua per vestigia volvitur annus.

VERGIL, *Geor.* II.

TO  
MY SISTER  
ANNIE L. M. KYNASTON





## PREFACE

THE concluding pages for the month of June appeared in an extended form as an article on "The Vogue of the Garden Book" in the *Nineteenth Century Review* for June, 1900; the description of the May-day revels is condensed from a story in the *Cornhill Magazine* of June, 1897; the incident of Meshach Werge's treasure appeared in the number of *In Town* for January, 1897; and four other short sketches have been published in *The Country* and the *St. James's Gazette*.

To the editors of those periodicals I beg to offer my thanks for their kind permission to use the articles or portions of them here.

I am grateful also to two friends for help in the chapters on the country and garden in autumn.

H. M. B.

HOE BENHAM  
*November, 1902*



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## A BOOK OF THE COUNTRY AND THE GARDEN

### MARCH

*March* 15. **I**F I had the making of my garden over again I think it should be only a wild garden. There should be no flower-beds near the house, and all my best plants should be grown in wide borders in the kitchen plots. Close up to the door would come fine turf, and grouped in it there would be heather, gorse, broom, and other native plants and shrubs, with winding natural paths between. Further away I would encourage in a bosky dell grass of a more rampant sort, in which I might naturalise some of the garden plants which are best adapted to this method of treatment. There should be leafy borders, wet ditches, natural rocky elevations, or elevations which would look natural, and each with its carefully planted groups of subjects fitted for their positions, all trying to persuade the observer that they grew in a wild

state. But near the house there should be only my unadorned nature garden of turf and gorse and heath, arranged in Nature's own fashion of simple graceful lines which man has not yet learnt to improve upon.

But my garden, small as it is, is an actual fact which has to be faced as it stands. To the south of the house and sloping away from it are several beds of roses, a single variety in each bed, thickly underplanted with spring bulbs. To the north, beyond a natural terrace, lie flower-beds, the croquet lawn, and some long borders. Beyond these borders again is a young orchard thinly planted with bush and standard trees, with well-kept grass paths intersecting it. There is no boundary fence between garden and orchard; the paths of the latter lead out of the garden paths, and are a continuation of them. This orchard is my wild garden.

On the left side as I walk up the sloping ground the land lies in a low bank which is planted with broom and heather. The common European pæonies show their heads over the grass in May; polyanthuses and primroses abound close to the path, and everywhere there are spring bulbs.

On the right lies the main portion of the orchard, and in the grass there are planted many good things. Oriental poppies show their strong foliage; perennial lupins come up in large masses; sweet-williams are dotted about plentifully, michaelmas daisies, irises, giant rheums, foxgloves, alkanets, doronicums, evening primroses, St. John's wort—these are some of the plants which abound in the



grass. They are by no means the only ones which have been tried. More things have failed in my wild garden than have thriven there. But failures have been due mainly to my own ignorance, which encouraged me to try impossible plants and an impracticable method of growing them.

Every keen gardener has, doubtless, some main ideal to which other equally valuable intentions are subordinated. One, for instance, likes to have a garden picture; another, regardless of æsthetic



EVERYWHERE THERE ARE SPRING BULBS

effects, is satisfied with a gorgeous show of colour. My own chief aim is neither of these. I want flowers for cutting all the year round. I want them from my garden for seven or eight months of the year, and when I cannot reasonably expect them in the open I want them from my greenhouse. I like to have large quantities of them to live with, and to give to friends. Flowers in the greenhouse thirty yards away give me no pleasure when I am sitting on a cold winter's day in my drawing-room. Flowers in the garden are essential, but in the

sitting-rooms they are no less necessary. In fact, wherever one lives there are flowers wanted, and consequently the plants in my garden are mainly those whose blossoms are suitable for gathering and arranging in vases, thus paying a double debt—in their beds first, for a short space, and afterwards in the rooms wherein I live.

I am bound to confess that much as I should like to have a real garden wilderness I think it would be impossible to get flowers enough from it to justify me in giving up all my ground to it. Deficiencies would be made up of course from the kitchen plots, whose reserve borders for flowers would be a necessity of the scheme. For the best show in a wild garden is over by July. In April come, with primroses and lungworts, countless bulbs of a hundred kinds; in May pæonies, fritillaries, poet's narcissus, broom—all under a canopy of apple blossom. In June there follows a brilliant display, looking glorious in the long grasses, but from July onward the picture changes. The brown seeding grass is hardly less beautiful, but the flowers thriving in it are fewer and less showy than hitherto. It would be vain to depend upon them for the many purposes for which flowers are required; so the kitchen borders would be wanted to fill the gaps and to prevent a famine in the land.

Everything that is not needed elsewhere is thrust out into my wild garden. All the bulbs which have bloomed in pots, all the scraps of herbaceous plants whose rampant growth has entailed division, all the seedlings not wanted in the borders—these find

a place in the herbage, and thrive there according as they hold their own with it or no. Refuse seeds are thrown broadcast into it, in the hope that a stray one here or there may find a nook in which it will germinate. There are few which have not been tried in it, though not many have done well.

It is of no use to dibble plants among the grass and to go away in the confidence that they will live there. I have tried that plan with egregious failure as a result. Good-sized irregular-shaped beds should be dug, and the turves turned over so that the grass shall die. These beds may have an autumnal planting of things likely to repay the labour, and may then be left alone. Apart from the blooms they give they will look bare for the first summer, but the surrounding grass will quickly seed itself upon them, and in the second year the flowers will be really springing from the grass, and the effect will be beautiful. Colonies can be established in this way year after year, until in the course of time all the ground is covered with flowering plants with sparse grass between. Bulbs can be dibbled into these beds as they come to hand.

There is no reason why many beautiful plants from all quarters of the world should not be naturalised in the wild garden. Among our own British flora we find as a matter of course growing in grassy places such things as foxgloves, primroses, forget-me-nots, asphodels, anemones, columbines, and a thousand others. Is there any valid reason why in association with them we should not grow under similar conditions exotics belonging to the same families? I trow not. Mr. William Robinson

in his delightful book, *The Wild Garden*, tells us how good results may be secured in this way.

The yellow foxglove, one of the hardiest and most robust of plants, would be a fit companion for its spotted relative; the Asiatic primroses for the English. There are perhaps a good half-dozen plants of the forget-me-not family which would thrive with our own beautiful blue spring flower, and the same may be said of the columbine in its season. But even these might yield place in point of fitness to the many bulbous things which could not fail to do well in the herbage. Imagine an orchard glittering in springtime with the narcissus of a hundred varieties; with the nodding star of Bethlehem, too seldom seen; with the fritillary in many forms, the Spanish hyacinth in two or three colours, the scarlet tulip, the scilla, the dog's-tooth violet, the snowflake, and many more! The imagination can hardly picture anything in nature more beautiful than this. And the spring show would be succeeded by a summer show as beautiful and even more striking, and, moreover, helped out by waving grass growing naturally among the flowers. I do not know any kind of gardening more effective than wild gardening in its season.

Many persons who have no grass meadow to devote to a wild garden could at least do something to improve the terrible shrubbery which reigns in every conventional English garden enclosure. There are hosts of things that will flourish even in such hostile society as that of deep-rooting lilacs and light-excluding laurels. It would be an idle effort to attempt to persuade the average

Englishman to abolish his belt of laurels and berberis. But it might be possible to induce him, at any rate, so to diminish their number that each tree shall have room sufficient to assert itself and to justify its existence. A laurel allowed to grow into its own natural shape is not a hideous object in the garden—no tree that is natural is ever un-beautiful. But a laurel crushed up against its neighbours into a shapeless mass is ugly enough to make the æsthetic soul eschew for ever the whole laurel family. If this shrub is essential to the well-being of the Englishman, there is, at any rate, no sufficient reason why he should not have it in its best form, which is its natural form. And if it is given a prominent place in the garden landscape—a thing lamentable when its room could be taken by flowering shrubs of real beauty—there might be encouraged under it herbaceous plants which would transform the shrubbery into something approaching distinction. Michaelmas daisies would thrive there, evening primroses, delphiniums, wallflowers, trilliums, and many more, with such bulbs as lilies, irises, tulips, cyclamens, muscaris, and crocuses. There is infinite scope even in the terrible shrubbery for good and tasteful gardening, provided the interspaces are large enough to allow their occupants to maintain their identity.

My garden, as I have said, is an accomplished fact, so that I cannot do the thing that I would. It is only by gardening that one can learn what right gardening is. I have had my opportunity, and have misused it. But the part I love best of my small domain is not the trim grass lawn with its carefully

tended borders above and beds below ; not the rose plot with its several hundred bushes half hidden in the spring by a blaze of flowering bulbs. My favourite resort is the wild garden of the orchard, which, even in late summer, when its grass grows brown and brittle in the wind, gives me a fuller conviction of what true gardening should be than do the tidy rose-beds and the carefully tended borders beside the smooth lawn.

But if one cannot have the garden that experience has taught is the best and the most beautiful—if life's opportunities can never repeat themselves—one may, at any rate, make the best of the garden as it exists after several years of loving tendance have brought a certain amount of result in return for the trouble spent upon it. As a garden it may only be a poor, small thing, but at least it is my own, and cramped and stupid as it may appear to the casual observer, it yields as many flowers as any other of double its size with which I am acquainted.

But the struggle for results has been a hard one. When I first took to gardening I began with the very simple plan of growing everything I could get. Nothing came amiss with me, whether from the auction room, or the retail salesman, or the gardens and greenhouses of my friends. It seems to me in retrospect that one day I said, "Go to; I will make a garden." And forthwith I bought largely of what sellers had to offer, supplemented by what friends had to give, and then sat down to enjoy the results of my labour. These were unforeseen and peculiar. I had scorned the idea of growing snapdragons, and larkspurs, and Canterbury bells, and suchlike

common things, and a close study of the growers' catalogues led me to indulge plentifully in the *ostrowskia magnifica*, the *romneya coulteri*, the *iris laevigata*, the *crinum longifolium*, the *meconopsis wallichii*, and other glorious and important-sounding subjects. When summer came the ostrowskias appeared indeed, but only to demonstrate that they found their position untenable, and had not the slightest intention of thriving in it; the romneyas languished early and quite unreasonably for want of water, and when supplied with it disappeared altogether; the irises and the Himalayan poppies never came up at all, because the soil was too dry for them, and the crinums, though they have flourished ever since, have never shown the slightest inclination to flower.

And it was much the same in the greenhouse. There were artillery plants which never found heat enough to make them explode; amaryllids that stood up bravely in their greenery, but refrained from weakening themselves by flower production; yellow callas that did not bloom when blooms were wanted. For the most terrible part of the business was this, that all through the winter, when blossoms would have been valuable, there were none to be found in my greenhouse. They reserved themselves for a summer show, and flowered gaily when at last—for eventually I had to come down to common border plants—the outdoor garden was able to supply all I wanted.

One year's experience of this sort of thing made me realise that by some means or another "there must be an holteration somewhere," as the gardener,

Sterculus, says when he goes on the warpath. I discovered through a process of exhaustion those plants which would bloom in a winter temperature such as we are able to maintain in our greenhouse, and by degrees I eliminated all that required summer sunshine or stove heat to make them flower. I cannot boast of the variety which once adorned my greenhouse, but at any rate the plants that are in it are those which blossom at mid-winter, and thus succeed summer things in our living-rooms. The results might appear contemptible to many an eye, but in point of quantity I think they are the best that can be obtained from a thousand cubic feet of glass.

At this time of year, however, and for some months to come, the greenhouse is a matter of secondary importance, and no flowers, or hardly any, will be found in it which required winter tendance or room on its stages at that season. Achimenes, begonias, gloxinias will presently be gay in it, but these have lain under the shelves and have given no trouble through the winter. Petunias, balsams, and other various annuals will lend it brightness, but they are propagated in spring, and, like the tubers, have had no actual winter existence. But as the earliest of these things cannot be expected to bloom before June, there will be plants left over from late winter for the present furnishing of the greenhouse, and although these will not be very varied, they will be in sufficient quantity to keep it bright.

There would seem, judging from results, to be very few persons living in the country and owning



a limited amount of glass who really care to have flowers all the year round, though I doubt if there are any who would confess as much. Yet their houses are crowded with plants which bloom from March to October, instead of those which bloom from October to March. The mischief lies in the fact that they are already furnished with hard-wooded plants, which year by year occupy more room, yet do not give results proportionate to the space they exact. But their owners would contemplate with horror the idea of consigning all these things to the rubbish heap. I confess that it required some strength of mind and considerable hardening of the heart before I could persuade myself to do this, and to grow for the most part soft-wooded stuff; but the issue has been so much more satisfactory that I have never regretted the sacrifice of my cherished azaleas, bouvardias, and other things of similar habit.

The plants which, most of all, perhaps, are valuable in the winter are the zonal pelargoniums, commonly called geraniums, and this is the time to get them in hand. Cuttings are taken only from those varieties which can endure to bloom in a moderate winter temperature, but their name is legion, and many dealers now make a speciality of them. These cuttings are struck in March, and are grown away rapidly for six months, and encouraged by plentiful supplies of water and suitable fertilisers to make strong and free foliage. Until October they are not allowed to carry a flower, each incipient blossom being carefully removed as soon as it appears, and until August the branches are

stopped as they require it, to induce a bushy shape. In the hot weather they are placed in the sunniest part of the garden, and never allowed to become completely dry, and by the month of September, when they are housed, they are good strong plants, capable of flowering continuously for three or four months or more. There are many amateurs who fail to get satisfactory results from pelargoniums in the winter, but there is no difficulty in doing so if the right sorts are chosen and the summer routine is carefully observed. Primulas may be sown at the end of the month if they are wanted for December, and a second sowing in May will ensure a succession throughout the winter.

But it needs a certain amount of tenacity at this time of year, when the outside garden is full of promise and spring is bursting over the land, to do the necessary work that is demanded for next winter's enjoyment. The present time is so infinitely better than any future when that present time is the spring of the year. And the reward which outdoor flowers will give us is nearer than that which we can expect from greenhouse plants grown for next winter's enjoyment. So the place of greenhouse work is taken by work in the garden, and there is much to be done in it for a long time to come.

*March 24.* The pruning of hybrid perpetual bushes needs some acquaintance with the individual habit of each kind of rose. If separate beds are given up to one variety, a glance at the occupants at this season will tell, better than any garden book could do, what bad habit is to be corrected by

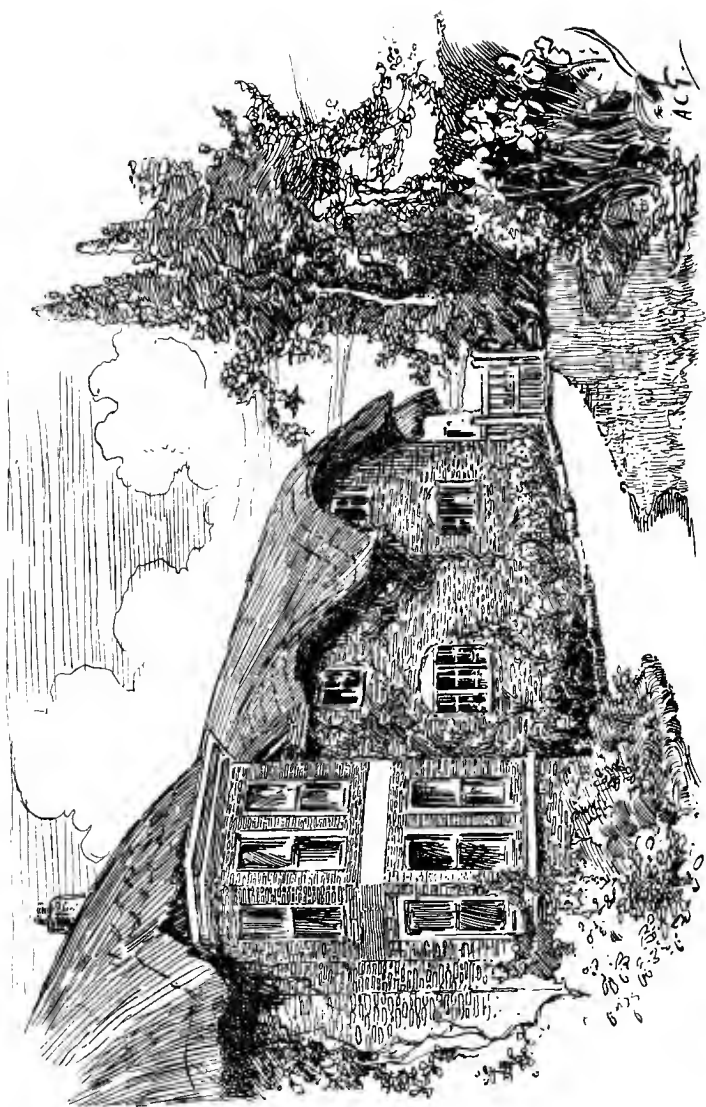
pruning. Captain Christy, with its upright growth, for instance, should be well thinned out at the centre; Countess of Oxford, which is apt to break too high, should in this case be cut back to the bare, hard, and apparently budless main stems; and the hardly recognisable rings, which at present look incapable of bursting into growth, will send forth buds which will make good branches and flower as soon as any others. Eugen Fürst requires very hard pruning, because it breaks so early in the spring; and with Jean Liabaud a sharp eye should be kept on that portion of growth which comes direct from the soil, for the stock is apt to outgrow the scion unless care is taken. And so with all the other roses in a garden, each has its idiosyncrasy, and must be corrected in accordance with it. The usual rule for pruning is to cut back to a dormant bud with an outward tendency, and this rule answers exceedingly well until the gardener has gained experience of his own and is able to modify it in conformity with this experience.

Nearly all hardy annuals should be sown about the end of March, for if this is not done until later the sun's power may be so great that the seedlings will not make sufficient root growth before they are forced into bloom, and so their season will be a short one. I have had for several years some success with dahlias treated as hardy annuals. The seed is gathered in the autumn and sown in March, and if May frosts threaten a handful of bracken is thrown over the young seedlings. They are thinned to a few inches apart, and by the time the carefully tended dahlias from indoors are flowering there is

also a hedge of single and semi-double dahlias in the kitchen garden far exceeding them in strength and floriferous value, although the blossoms are not of correct form or of orthodox habit. Still they are exactly what are wanted for cutting, and the supply is unfailing until winter frosts lay them low.

Most of the half-hardy annuals are sown either now or in April in pans or boxes in the greenhouse, or else in frames outside. Nearly all of them are the better for being raised from the first without fire heat, and little beds in the open are quite practicable for many things in sheltered gardens, provided that they have the protection of glass. An excellent plan for those who cannot spare cold frames for this purpose is to buy a few sheets of twenty-one-ounce glass, and to extemporise little frames to carry the sheets. One or two laths cut into pieces an inch or so smaller in each direction than the glass, nailed together and laid on the ground, and covered with a sheet of the glass, will make an admirable shelter for a little patch of some half-hardy annual. As the seedlings grow the laths may be raised on bricks, and by this means the young plants will be safe until the danger of frost is over. They must be thinned as soon as they require it, and this is the most important part of the whole system of their culture.

*March 25.* When Jim first broke away from his busy London life, having made up his mind that the solitude of the country was more conducive to the study of the philosophies than was the quicker, strenuous existence he had led since leaving the old home, he asked me to share his cottage



COTTAGE AND ANNEXE



with him, and I cordially agreed to the proposal. In the old times my brother had always been my closest friend, and nothing could be more natural now than that we should make our home together. It was literally a case of making a home, for he had bought a couple of labourers' cottages with a meadow adjoining, and our first summer was spent in building an *annexe* to the original structure. This was his province, while the making of the garden was mine. House and garden are both about seven years old now, and have settled down into congenial fellowship. The house looks weathered and middle-aged with its fast-mellowing brick walls and its sober thatched roof. The garden with all its faults—and there were many in its planning—is not out of harmony with the house. Both are simple, humble, natural, as they should be.

We had in our efforts a valuable coadjutor in the person of Sterculus Picumnus, that worthy successor of the son of Faunus, who, as Dean Hole in one of his most fascinating books has reminded us, invented the art of spreading manure on the land to enrich it for cultivation. Sterculus lived for several years in our employ, and gave himself up heart and soul to making our garden; then, tempted by a large wage, he left us a year since for a better situation in the North of England. Mrs. Sterculus Picumnus, who had urged him perseveringly to this course, was a person not altogether without insight, and when I bade her good-bye she flung her arms round my neck and wept on my bosom, crying—

“Don't lose sight of us; don't lose sight of us! We might be glad of you yet.”

We did not lose sight of them, and they are glad of us now, and we of them, after divers unhappy experiences with their incompetent or unpleasing successors. It is by no means a difficult thing



STERCULUS PICUMNUS

to get a good gardener for a large estate ; it is extraordinarily difficult to get a good gardener for a small one. We tried five in our unhappy year. One drank ; a second neglected his work ; others proved impossible in various respects. The last







ENTER THE CARRIER EXPECTANT OF ORDERS

was an admirable gardener, but he never succeeded in living on speaking terms with more than one person at a time, his temper being execrable.

This is the kind of thing that went on :—

Enter the carrier, expectant of orders. Sterculus digging at three yards' distance.

*Sterculus (to the garden boy)*. "I wants two casts o' pots from Davies'."

*Boy (to carrier)*. "He wants two casts o' pots from Davies'."

*Carrier*. "What size o' pots?"

*Boy (to Sterculus)*. "What size o' pots?"

*Sterculus*. "Vorty-eights and twenty-vours."

*Boy (to carrier)*. "Vorty-eights and twenty-vours."

*Carrier*. "All right."

*Sterculus (viciously)*. "It wun't be all right if he breaks 'em."

*Boy (to carrier)*. "It wun't be all right if you breaks 'em."

*Carrier (with fury)*. "I'll break his head if he says I breaks his pots."

*Boy (to Sterculus)*. "He'll break your head if you says he breaks your pots."

*Sterculus (sarcastically)*. "Let un try."

*Boy (to carrier)*. "He says, 'You try'!"

Exit carrier in dire wrath. Sterculus being triumphantly emergent from the fray, forgives the carrier and sets up an antagonism with the cook.

This sort of thing was rather droll at first, but very soon the inconveniences attaching to it made the amusement pall, and after several warnings our quarrelsome friend was requested to leave us; and presently our own original Sterculus discovered that

he would "be glad of us" again, and we are all happy together once more. He is not flawless, our Sterculus. No human being, save Heine, ever yet found another human being flawless; his *Mädchen* was perfect in every way, but she was unluckily dead. We used to think of Sterculus as perfect while he was only so far away as Northumberland; but with all his faults we are as glad of him as he is of us, and our garden grows and thrives once more under his diligent devotion.

*March 27.* We have put Sterculus's brother on for a few weeks, to attend to the grass and to get it into good order after a whole winter's neglect. It is not often that Sterculus will permit us to employ extra labour. For one thing he enjoys the grievance of being overworked, and takes a sour delight in pointing out the results of the labour of "one pair o' 'ands." For another, he, being a Wiltshireman, has but a small opinion of his neighbours in the land of his adoption, and loves to liken them to their own famous farm product, the Berkshire pig. "I've seen a pig in a garden afore now," he says; "and I cain't say I liked the sight." But he is obliging enough to allow us sometimes to employ his brother Meshach, who has followed him into exile, and Meshach just now is doing a very important work. He is a serious young man, who is suffering from what is called a "conviction." This has nothing to do with the law's majesty, but is merely the correct phraseology in our rural dissenting circles for intimating that the sufferer is in the first stage of salvation. A conviction of sin is a necessary preliminary to grace. This young man

has been rather "gay"—there is nothing more reprehensible in our rustic society than a reputation for gaiety, mild as its form may be—and in order to remove him from some other undesirable young men, Jim got him the offer of a place in Patagonia, where, strange to say, many of our lads find work and high wages on the sheep farms. When I heard that he had refused the situation, I went to ask him



"I'VE SEEN A PIG IN A GARDEN"

the reason why. He is a dreamy youth, and he answered me in the intervals of turf-edging as though his heart and his thoughts were alike in a land that is very far off.

"Ah! there's many a time as us wants to follow out our own plans, and God has got to fetch us back to do our work all over again in He's way. I be for all the world like Jonah—fetched back to work in God's way, not in my way. We've all got

to be fetched back some time or another, you see, ma'am."

"But you never actually started, Meshach."

"Not perhaps to say started, but my mind had gone on afore. Enough fer God to fetch me back, anyways."

"And why do you think that it would have been wrong for you to go?"

"I don't think, ma'am. I knows."

"And how do you know?"

"I shud ha' lost time. On that there v'yage I'd ha' lost maybe a matter o' five or six months as shud ha' bin empl'yed fer God."

"I don't think you would be more than six weeks on the voyage."

"Maybe not, ma'am; but I shud ha' lost six months fer God. I've figured it all out, an' I *knows*."

"But how do you know?"

"Well, you see, 'tis like this yer. I was a-gwine to start this spring. You minds 'twas early in March I'd settled to leave. Well, ma'am, what season o' the year would it ha' bin when I'd reach Patagonia?"

"It would have been autumn there, of course. Their seasons are different from ours."

"That's right, ma'am; it would ha' bin autumn. Well now, when I shud come to meet God some day, how'd I 'count to Him fer my wasted summer?"

"But it wouldn't have been wasted——"

"Betwixt spring an' autumn there's allus a summer; there's no gettin' over that. I'd ha' left here

in spring ; I'd ha' got there in autumn. I wouldn't ha' had no summer at all. I'd ha' bin throwin' away time as ought to be empl'yed fer God."



"I'VE FIGURED IT ALL OUT"

" But the *time* would be the same——"

" I've worked it all out in my mind. There's time lost *somewheres*. *Where* 'tis lost I ain't

scollard enough to judge, nor it don't concern me to know more about it. What I looks at is that time'd ha' bin lost as I'd ought to spend fer God *now*. That's why I says I was fetched back like Jonah. God took care o' me, an' stopped my wilful waste of days an' seasons afore 'twas too late."

He turned with dreary determination to his clipping. He did not want to have his conclusions combated; a principle was involved, and his face was set firm. There is nothing more interesting than the getting at a new point of view in some fellow-mortal.

Sterculus is sowing grass seed in bare and shady places, and is laboriously protecting it from birds with lines of black cotton supported on sticks. We do not find that much of it grows when sown at this season; the spring droughts of the last years have been too cruel for seeds of many kinds, and the end of August is a better time for grass sowing than now. But there are bare places on the green paths, and turves are difficult to get, so that the second-best course must be resorted to, unsatisfactory as it is likely to be.

I have a great fancy this year to try masses of cool blossoms in parts of the borders where there are gaps large enough for several clumps together. For instance, in July and August, when the blazing sun is at his fiercest, and the eye shrinks from the pinks and reds and yellows of the gardener's choosing, how soothing would be a mass here of mauve and blue, and there of white and purple generously applied! So I am planting closely to-



gether a good many tubers of the fine blue *com-melina* called *celestis*, and all around and between it I shall have plants of the dwarfest and palest *ageratum*, and thus attempt a harmony in these two shades. The *commelina* is not very well known in gardens, and some who have it despise it because its blossoms are sparse, and mostly at the top of the stalk. But if it is planted closely and guarded round by plants a little shorter than itself, its gentian blue is admirable in beds and borders. I find that seed sown afresh every year is the easiest method of growing; but the plant forms slim tubers which may be dug up in autumn and kept through the winter in pots of sand in a cool greenhouse, and this is the plan generally adopted for its reproduction.

*Petunias* are being sown for greenhouse decoration in summer. The seed is procured from the best dealers, as cheap *petunia* seed is one of the many snares of the penny-packet salesman. For tubs and boxes out of doors we generally grow the old pink variety despised of *Sterculus*. Its flower is small, and not quite of the best shade of colour, but its persistence in blooming makes it welcome in my garden. It begins to unfold early in June, and until November frosts come it is a great sphere of colour in tubs under a verandah. Its trailing habit soon ensures the complete hiding of the tubs, and above and around and below hang the bright, rosy blossoms, never shy, never exhausted, never complaining, howsoever they may be neglected. They are far better worth growing than many better things.

It is hardly too early to plant a few of the tender gladioli in the reserve plots of the kitchen garden. Frosts may threaten them in May, but it is not difficult to protect a dozen plants or so. The main supply will not be set out until next month, as gladioli are most valuable late in summer when many other flowers are over ; one does not really want them until August.



## APRIL

*April* 14. **T**HIS is "Cuckoo Day," as it is locally called, and the first taste of spring is in the air. Hitherto we have been much plagued by cold winds, but to-day the sunshine is unspoilt by a north-easterly blast, and the bees have come out in myriads to sip honey from the *arabis albida*—mountain-snow, as the rustics call it — on the sloping rockery. Notwithstanding climatic discouragement there is already a brave show of flowering bulbs. Two long beds of tea roses, which have just been pruned, are a mass of *narcissus cynosure*, bordered and under-planted with blue squills from Siberia, and the contrast is very beautiful. In March these squills were associated with white crocuses, but the crocuses are over first, as their blossoming time is shorter, and the squills have thrown up a succession of bloom spikes, which extend their season into that of the

daffodils. Two other beds are planted thickly with mixed hyacinths, another with hyacinths all of pink and creamy tints, and yet a fourth with blues and cold whites. The effect is delightful. There are other beds planted with tulips, but these are not yet out of the bud stage.

It is very rarely that I see in gardens a series of beds given over wholly to the combination of roses and bulbs, which I consider one of the most satisfactory which I have attempted. Rose specialists have said so much to discourage the growing of anything else with the queen of flowers that many amateur gardeners fear to make the experiment. The rose fancier naturally looks at the question from the circumscribed area of the show table, and it is perfectly true that one cannot have show roses from beds which in spring have been radiant with countless tulips. I do not for a moment contend that the largest and most perfect roses can be got from these beds; it is obvious that they cannot. But there is a better ideal than this of the exhibitor. We do not want show roses, two or three on a bush, in our everyday gardens; we want large quantities of blooms average in size, good in shape, and perfect in colour—blooms which we can cut by the score or the hundred, leaving no gaps to tell the tale. Roses of this description can be grown with bulbs, and neither the roses nor the bulbs will be such as one need be ashamed of.

Then, again, the bulb fancier hears with horror the theory that such things as tulips and hyacinths can be permanently planted and left undisturbed for years between the roots of rose bushes. To

him the tulip and the hyacinth are semi-sacred things which require annual planting, annual digging, drying and storing. Doubtless his results are better than mine, but mine are quite good enough to make a very pleasing show in the spring, and they give me no labour at any season. My hyacinths have been planted for at least five or six years and left undisturbed. Their flowers, certainly, are not so big as they were in their first season, but that is a trifling matter. They are quite large enough to give a beautiful effect, and they have increased enormously in number since they were planted. Some of the spikes, I regret to say, are even now bulky enough to require staking when March winds blow hard, and after five years' trial of hyacinths as permanent inhabitants of my rose-beds I am quite satisfied with the result.

It is the same with the tulips. I confess that in the first planting I went wrong with these bulbs, but it was not in putting them among my roses that I erred, but in buying, in some instances, inferior varieties. Artus, for example, and Brutus attracted me by their cheapness, and two beds given over to them are a perpetual eyesore. But a large terra-cotta kind, whose name I do not know, is as handsome and almost as large as when first planted, and another bed of La Reine is equally charming, though these have dwindled somewhat in size.

Another rose-bed is given over to the multi-coloured crown anemones which are so easily grown from seed. Seed sown now and carefully

tended gives good plants which flower all the first autumn, and continue to increase in quantity, if not in quality, for many years; but some people find great difficulty in raising these flowers, and a word



ANEMONES AND STANDARD ROSES

or two detailing my own experience with them may be of use.

A little plot of ground in the sunniest part of the kitchen garden should be carefully chosen and prepared and watered. The seed may then be

sown and thinly covered with fine soil, and sheets of newspaper laid over all. Under this paper the soil must be kept moist the whole of the time that the seed is germinating, and herein is the whole secret of success. As it entails constant trouble and attention the results are generally disappointing, but given the necessary conditions, anemones can be raised with the greatest ease by the most ignorant gardener, and if anything in the whole garden looks better in May than a bed of these, under-planted with pansies, I should much like to see it.

One warning is necessary with regard to anemones grown among roses. The beds must not be manured in December, but in August, when the tubers are at rest. If the operation is delayed until the leaves are shooting up in late autumn, they will die.

*April 22.* *Narcissus cynosure* and *N. Figaro*, some of the loveliest of the cheaper daffodils, have lost their distinctive character this year through the rough, cold weather. The calyx has come pure yellow instead of red-tipped, and their full beauty is lost. But they are "very plenty," as Sterculus says, so there is not much cause for complaint. In the wild garden I have these in some quantity, as well as many other varieties which are greatly increasing every year.

I do not buy bulbs specially for the wild garden. Every autumn I get them in large quantities for culture in frames and greenhouse, and in spring, when they have served their purpose there, they are turned out into the orchard, being carefully

planted not too closely together. Here they finish maturing their root and leaf growth, and here in following years they flower in profusion. Each season some thousands of daffodils are so treated, as are also fritillaries, Italian hyacinths, erythroniums, stars of Bethlehem, crocuses, squills, and even tulips, although these, I confess, do not give such uniformly good results as other bulbs. They come rather small, but make bright spots of colour in the green, while all the others do their best



DAFFODILS IN THE WILD GARDEN

among the herbage which is their natural accompaniment. It is far more satisfactory to pick daffodils from a semi-wild spot such as this than to rob prominent beds of their occupants, as of old I was forced to do. Of course the beds are not spared; the flowers are there to be gathered, and nothing is considered immune if it is wanted elsewhere. But since I have had my wild garden I am bound to acknowledge that the beds present a better appearance, as they are less liable to depredation.



One of the best herbaceous plants for the wild garden is the sweet-william. Mine were merely thrust out into the grass three or four years ago, and they hold their own and flower well there. Perennial lupins are also promising handsomely, with oriental poppies, single rockets, and the herbaceous asters, while wallflowers and polyanthus are a mass of colour, contrasting in their sober tints with the gayer bulb colonies and with the yellow doronicums which are in brilliant flower now, and will last into June.

Many seeds of perennials should be sown in April. Wallflowers, for instance, never make noble plants if one waits till summer to sow them. Delphiniums, aquilegias, the type pentstemons, evening primroses, especially the beautiful creeping *œnothera taraxacifolia*, campanulas, carnations are all the better for early attention if they are to make strong plants before the winter.

Beds of wallflowers, common as they are with us, can never look amiss if they are of the single sort, and one of the best combinations I have is of gold and primrose kinds planted each in a fair-sized colony running into its neighbour's ground. The blood-red one, which is also indispensable, looks well with the salmon shade, and these four colours are all that are needed in the ordinary garden. But wallflowers judiciously harmonised with bulbs bear off the palm for arrangement. A bed of terra-cotta tulips planted with blood-red wallflowers, and arranged in squares of four—three plants of the square being tulips and the fourth a wallflower—is inexpressibly attractive

when often repeated over a good-sized bed. Yellow tulips and primrose wallflowers are as good a mixture, and this scheme in general is a pleasing change from the invariable carpet of forget-me-not or red daisies, from which in most gardens the wallflowers spring. Combinations of bulbs, too, are a happy variation from old-established ideas. A very successful one is that of the dark blue hyacinth, General Havelock, with the Orange Phoenix narcissus, and another as pretty has alter-



DORONICUMS IN A GRASSY PLACE

nate bulbs of the pale blue hyacinth, Lord Derby, and the yellow jonquil.

*April 24.* How glad is the gardener to get the smallest hint which may help in floriculture! It would never have occurred to me to grow spring bulbs with ferns, yet to-day I have been in a garden where the fernery is a mass of tulips and narcissi, with tender fronds of the ferns growing beside them, and ready to take their place and hide their companions as soon as these lose their beauty. When the flowers are over and the spiky leaves begin to get limp, they are cut down to within about four

inches of the ground, and then the ferns have their turn, and the mutilated bulb foliage is hidden away under their green skirts until it dies down to the earth. This cutting of the foliage does not interfere with the next season's flowers, provided that these few inches are left to help mature the bulb. The effect of the arrangement is delightful at two separate seasons, which is one of the main ends to secure in gardening.

I have just seen the four best plants of cyclamens which it has ever been my privilege to behold. Not one carried less than two hundred buds and blossoms. The proud owner told me their history, and I make haste to record it.

Twelve months ago she was about to throw away her plants as old and worthless, when it occurred to her to split one of them up, and to see what might happen. Accordingly she took a corm of a large white kind, and divided it into four pieces, leaving some growing points on each and carefully dipping the raw edges into powdered charcoal to heal the cuts. They were potted up separately into five-inch pots, and put on a greenhouse shelf near the glass until they began to grow, when they were removed to a cold frame. Twice a day they were syringed, and of course duly watered, and in August they were shifted into pots one size larger, and before cold weather came were removed into a cool house, from which frost was barely excluded. Here they have remained all through the winter, getting plenty of air and daily moisture overhead as well as at the roots. The soil, which was firmly rammed into the pots, consisted of two parts of turf mould,

with one part of peat, one of leaf mould, a little soot, and a liberal quantity of sharp sand. The results are almost incredible, except to one who has seen them.

My dislike to growing greenhouse plants which have to stand a winter before their flowering season comes does not apply to such things as may be kept through that season in a cold frame, so I have just been sowing seeds of the chimney campanula to decorate the greenhouse a year or more hence. They are sown thinly in a pan of sandy soil in the cool house, and the seedlings, when they are large enough to handle, are pricked out into thumb-pots in a light compost, and then moved to a frame. They are given a shift as often as they need it, which may be twice or thrice throughout the summer, care being taken to prevent their getting pot-bound at any time. In the winter they are kept in a protected cold frame, although no special anxiety is felt about them if they suffer a few degrees of frost. At the end of February, or soon after, they receive their final potting into seven-inch pots, or even larger if necessary, and they are then placed in the greenhouse to encourage them to move. As soon as the flower stems appear weak liquid manure is applied twice a week, and at all times plenty of air is given. They make large and well-furnished plants, provided that care is taken to keep them as cool as I have indicated through all their stages of growth, for hardy things will not do their best if unduly coddled. These and the cup-and-saucer campanulas are among the most beautiful plants which can be

grown for the adornment of the greenhouse in early summer, and it is wonderful that they are not more seen, although no doubt the reason lies in the trouble that has to be taken to ensure stocky growth.

Another important provision for future needs is the planting out of violets for autumn blooming. We generally try to use for this purpose only the tufts which have lived out of doors all the winter, as they are hardier and healthier than those which have been in frames. Each separate runner is taken from the old plants and put out in a well-prepared bed. If there are not runners enough single crowns are used, and the plants are placed a foot apart. They should not be in a shady spot, though the partial shade of thin fruit trees will not hurt them, and will save some watering in dry weather. But the labour of watering must not in any case be grudged them, for on this will depend their value next winter. They should have a good soaking whenever they seem to be getting dry, and a certain amount of weak manure water when they are approaching maturity will also help them. All young runners are removed as they appear, and at the end of August we go round the roots with the spade at a distance of several inches from the plants. This leads them to throw out new fibres, which, when the plants are transferred to the frames about the third week in September, will the more easily accommodate themselves to their new soil and prevent any check being felt from lifting. At the time of their removal they will be bristling with buds, and unless they suffer from too much kindness directly after-

wards they should give large quantities of flowers from October onwards.

The first sowing of cinerarias for the winter is now being made, and cuttings of fibrous-rooted begonias are being struck. This necessity of forethought is generally supposed by persons who are not gardeners to be an intolerable nuisance, but it is in reality one of the joys of floriculture; the flowers are so much the more one's children if one has cherished them and loved them before they had their birth. And forethought for a season twelve months hence is no more difficult than forethought for the near summer, when once the gardener has lived in the routine of it. It would be as impossible for him, or for her, to forget to strike winter zonal pelargoniums in March as to ignore their flowers if they are in bloom at that season. The very name of the month suggests the culture of some plants, just as it suggests the flowering of others; and this habit, once established and applied to each season in succession, becomes a habit of devotion as well as of necessity. April, for instance, suggests the pruning of tea roses, the planting of gladioli, the flowering of fritillaries, and a hundred other things which never occur to the remembrance in July or August or any other inapposite month. The experienced gardener has no need of a calendar to remind him of each season's work, for each is its own remembrancer and sufficient unto itself for the purpose. But it is the most experienced who will have such fear of forgetting that he will renew his memory and give it artificial support by the aid of the garden diary.

I think Jim is the most reclusive man that I have ever known ; he is also entirely different from anybody else, which is so very comforting in a person



LYDIA DIC

with whom one has to live. For one thing, he never says anything. I do not mean that if you ask him a question he will not reply "yes" or "no," or that he will refuse to do a fair amount of conversational duty when the necessity is forced upon him.

But he never thrusts conversation upon you, nor gets opinionative, nor lays down the law, nor in any way expresses himself when he can possibly refrain from so doing. This characteristic is so utterly different from any that the average man can boast that it amounts to the charm of eccentricity of the best kind.

Another remarkable thing about Jim is that he never tries to coerce anybody. If a servant or other person takes it into his head to behave in an extraordinary manner, Jim never for a moment dreams of checking him ; " I daresay he's all right, really," he says. And it is the same thing even with the animals. He has to keep his hands in his pockets at meal times, except when he is making use of them, because his favourite cat claws them in order to attract his attention and to induce him to give her portions of his food. I have certainly heard him make a sudden and somewhat objurgatory remark when he has not taken this precaution, and Lydia Dic has succeeded in her wicked intention. His cat's name is Lydia, though the reason why I have never been able to discover, and naturally in the course of time she has become known as Lydia Dic. Any other person would hit Lydia Dic and break her of her bad habit in a couple of days ; but Jim pretends that he does not really object to it, although he is very careful to resort when necessary to the safe haven of those trouser pockets.

I wonder if absent-minded people know how absent-minded they are. One morning, when Jim made no beginning to eat his breakfast, I saw him



lifting up various articles from the table and putting them back again with an air of dissatisfaction. He examined a salt-cellar on every side and underneath; his teaspoon came in for a considerable share of attention, and so did the knives and forks in front of him. I passed him the mustard, but after looking at it carefully he put it down again. Then I said, "Will you have some cold chicken?" and he replied dreamily, "No, thank you."

"Jim," I said, "if you say the word aloud we shall very likely be able to find what you are looking for. What is it?"

"Oh, never mind; only an appetite," he murmured, as though his thoughts were millions of miles away in space. He has always stoutly denied the truth of this story, which makes me wonder if absent-minded persons know how absent-minded they are.

Some people might think it uncomfortable to live with a philosopher whose real self is in the remotest mists of metaphysic when you want to talk about snapdragons or carnation layers; but the oddest thing of all is that just when you imagine he is living among the ancient Greeks he wakes up to you suddenly, and knows everything that has been going on. His dreamy blue eyes see to the very bottom of you, and I would rather trust his judgment of character than that of most persons. We all went once to be introduced to a new member of the family of whom some of us thought we had reason to be rather proud. When Jim and I came away I said to him—

"What do you think of Seraphina?"

"Delightful!" replied Jim.

"What do you think of Seraphina, Jim?"

"Very nice, I'm sure."

"Jim, *what* do you think of Seraphina?"

"Well, as a woman I should certainly consider her a failure," he answered.

Some years have passed, and there are others of us besides Jim who consider that Seraphina as a woman is a failure.

Sometimes I think that it is not study alone which has given Jim his far-away look and quiet eyes, and ways too sedate for three-and-thirty years. Nor is it poverty, though he had known wealth and ease before there came the necessity for work. But this is a thing he will not talk about, and I shall never discover whether any soreness still troubles him about that old time.

It seemed a good time to us while it lasted. We had hardly known our parents; and a benevolent grandfather brought us all up, and many happy years we spent together in the grey old manor-house on the other side of the village. Jim was formally regarded as the heir to the property, and life promised him its best gifts of peace and plenty, when the old man died, and we found that he had left nearly everything to an alien—a distant cousin whom we had hardly heard of and never seen. For me and for the others it mattered little; our married lives were full and happy enough, but for the boy Jim—ah, that is a different story. He began to work, for he was too proud to accept what we would gladly have given, and for five long years he kept wanting just a little in front of him, yet

staring him in the face, until at last he became well known in that small circle which is able and keen to recognise the best gifts. And then he began to crave for the old place, and to feel that his work could be as well done in a country home as elsewhere ; so, since by that time the ties which had bound me had snapped asunder, we came back again, comparatively poor, to the village where we had spent our early years of wealth. It was the yearning for the soil and its native homely folk that brought Jim back. "I should not like to die away from them all," he said when he first told me what he was about to do ; and I, who knew how deeply rooted had been his affection for these humble friends of his boyhood, could not wonder that he should wish to come home to them.

That is my brother's story, so far as it goes ; but the saddest part is known only to himself, for he is not one who has ever prated of his troubles. He is happy enough now, I think, though I could desire fuller joys for him, and little children to drag him from his books and make him seem a boy again. But I do not think this will ever be, though sometimes I wonder—I cannot help wondering ; yet the very idea is impossible, and I have never spoken of it to mortal being.

*April 25.* It has often struck me as odd that no one has ever written about the garden boy. In these days, when we have life-histories of every genus from men to spiders, nobody has ever given us the life-history of the garden boy, and yet no type is more interesting if only you can get at him, which is the difficulty. He is of so little importance

in many establishments that I believe there are countless employers who do not even know that they have a garden boy. One in whom I was interested found a situation with some people not many miles distant, and six months later, when I was making a visit of ceremony, I inquired for the boy, and hoped that he was a good boy and did his work well. My hostess looked puzzled, and said she did not think they had a garden boy ; but I persisted with her, and she asked me if by any chance I could remember his name. By some fortunate chance I could ; his name was Dick Giles, and she turned to her daughter and asked if there was a boy, a garden boy, on the place named Dick Giles. The daughter was inclined to think there was not, but the master of the house, when appealed to, said he fancied he recollected the word "boy" on the wage list. But not even from him was I able to discover whether the boy was a good boy, or a clever boy, or an industrious boy, or even if he was the very boy I was inquiring for, though I knew that of this last there could be no doubt, for Dick Giles was better acquainted with his employers than they with him.

If we could hear the garden boy's opinion of ourselves we should be astonished at its truth and directness. No one is a better judge of his master, *quâ* man, or of his mistress, *quâ* woman, than he. He is a profound thinker, and this of necessity, for he is able but infrequently to express himself in words, lest a carrot or other convenient missile should be hurled by Sterculus at his head, to remind him that garden boys should hold their

tongues. But establish friendly relations with your garden boy when he is off duty in the evening, and he will surprise you by his freedom of speech and his astute comments on life. He will tell you which of our regiments are engaged in the inevitable



“MAY I. C. U. HOME, MY DEAR?”

African or Indian guerilla campaign, and whether the generals are capable of carrying the business through or no. He will discuss with you the subjects of building, agriculture, local government, and the recent eclipse with the fluency and acumen of a village cobbler, which is saying all that may be

said. He will bring out and exhibit with pride the little badges which Sterculus has never set eyes upon—the miniature penny portrait of the latest military hero, and the white bone disc bearing the inscription, “May I. C. U. home, my dear?” which he attaches to his buttonhole on Sundays and holidays, to the envy of less fortunate children. He will let you see that he regards you as an ally defensive against Sterculus, who in the matter of an occasional “day off” has sometimes to be encountered and defeated, he maintaining that garden boys “didn’t ought to want no holidays.” In short he will prove to you that the garden boy is as well worthy of study as the spider or the ant, or even the monkey, which he is sometimes supposed to resemble, and that you have neglected a means of investigating an interesting side of human nature until you have made his intimate acquaintance.

Garden boys are full of ambition. I never knew one who was not determined to get to the top of some tree or another—not a garden tree as a rule. Our present boy, when he is eighteen—nearly four years hence—will go into the Army and rapidly become a general of artillery. The last was determined to be a successful pirate, but has now settled down to assist his father in hawking bloaters. “You can get about and see the world nicely that way,” he says. The one immediately preceding him was almost more than a boy when he left us, and it was only under a species of compulsion, when I had pointed out the inadequacy of five shillings a week for a young man of eighteen and insisted that I should find him a more lucrative

place, that he consented to depart, provided that he might give up gardening for stable work. "If I leaves here I shan't stop till I'm head coachman to a duke," he said. That was four years ago, and as he is now second coachman to an earl, he appears to be in a fair way to realise his ambition.

So keen is our present boy about the Army that last year he actually ran away to enlist. One morning he failed to appear at his work, and presently an agitated mother turned up, saying that the boy had left home, and no one could guess what had become of him. But I could guess; and the following telegram was soon flying over the wires to the recruiting officers in the nearest country towns:—

*"Boy run away, supposed to enlist. Under age and in my employment. Name, Thomas Evans. Please return."*

The next morning when I went out into the garden Thomas Evans was weeding the onion bed. I said to him with severity—

"I should like to know, Thomas, what is your opinion about your conduct yesterday."

"My opinion is that it was very bad conduct, ma'am," replied Thomas in a voice tremulous with tears he was too proud to shed.

And then and there we made a compact, which we ratify at intervals, and which both Thomas and I regard as quite satisfactory. But it cannot be carried into effect until over three years from this present time, and in the meanwhile the garden is to receive the best of our care and loving attention.

Thomas has a keen eye for natural objects of

interest. Even the sight of a pheasant flying heavily over the garden will make him yearn to share the pleasure of watching it with another appreciative gazer; but this tendency is sternly repressed by Sterculus. This morning, when Sterculus was engaged in clipping the edges of a flower-bed, Thomas following him to pick up the bits of grass, I was surprised to hear, as I thought, the harsh cry of the green woodpecker from the very bed on which they were engaged. When I looked up there was Thomas carefully posed behind Sterculus's back, a grimy finger upheld to warn me that something of interest was in the very act of happening, and an eye kept the while on his tyrant, who was quite incapable even of realising that a green woodpecker's note had been sounded to attract my attention. I listened, and from the grove on the far hillside came the call, so long expected and this year so long delayed—"Cuckoo! cuckoo!"

I wonder if the notes of the cuckoo vary in different countries. In Beethoven's *Scene am Bach* his song is given as D natural and B flat. Our cuckoos certainly have a higher register. I have never tested their notes with a pitch pipe very early in the season, but in the last week of last June I remember to have found all the cuckoos singing F natural to D flat. If the song is D natural to B flat when he first comes over and then changes to F natural and D flat, this would account for the assertion in the old rhyme—

"In leafy June  
He'll change his tune."



But this saying probably refers to the rougher and hoarser voice which he produces for a few weeks before flying, and to the "Cuck-cuckoo" variation in the song.

I suppose that one of the reasons why the cuckoo rouses so much interest in us is that he seems, as Sterculus says, to have "all the evil passions of a Christian." There is no doubt, at any rate, that some very human faults beset him, for he is selfish, cruel, and unprincipled, and it is in reality through these unworthy traits that he impresses the imagination, while professing to do so in the character of harbinger of spring. I have just been reading Dr. Alexander Japp's book, *Our Common Cuckoo*, and I confess that I think considerably less of the cuckoo's moral nature than I did before I read it, while giving him credit still for such powers of self-seeking as adapt him for getting on in the world.

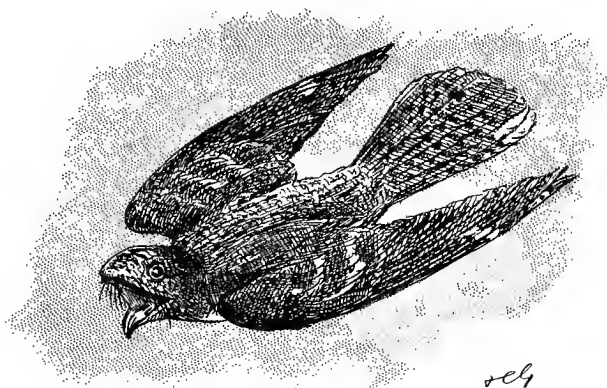
There seems to be no doubt that the female cuckoo lays her eggs on the ground, and carries them at once in her beak to a convenient nest; they are found very often in nests so small and so awkwardly placed that the intruding mother could not by any possibility sit on them. There are one hundred and twenty different kinds of nests in which the cuckoo is recorded to have left her eggs, but the most common is that of the hedge-sparrow, who will brood with patience eggs so unlike her own that it has even been suggested that she is colour-blind.

The eggs of cuckoos show a remarkable range of variation. Mr. Seebohm, in his supplement to

*British Birds*, has given carefully coloured illustrations of as many as fifteen varieties, ranging from blue to brown and from blotched to spotted specimens. Controversy seems to rage round this fact, one naturalist asserting that the coloration is an hereditary faculty; that each female cuckoo lays a particular type of egg; and that the cuckoo which lays blue eggs takes care to deposit them in the nest of some blue-egg-laying species, and so on. Another authority maintains that the blue eggs of the cuckoo are more frequently found in nests of birds with brownish eggs than in those with eggs of blue, so that the specialised colouring is misleading and purposeless. Another, again, seems to think that the variation is purely accidental, and that, if it were not, the cuckoo mother would be taking upon herself a great deal of unnecessary trouble, since the foster parents of many species are so easily deceived, and make no objection whatever to receiving and hatching the alien. This naturalist is also of opinion that other causes must be looked for to account for the variation, such as the age of the bird, or defective organisation.

Why does the cuckoo rely on foster-parents for the upbringing of her young? There are some charitably minded ornithologists who would fain persuade us that her stomach is so placed as to get in the way when she would sit, and that brooding is in consequence impossible. Yet there are well-authenticated cases of cuckoos hatching out their own young, and the night-jar, which suffers from a similar anatomical disability, never tries to shirk her maternal duties. Others imagine

that she has the instinct of the preservation of the species so strongly developed that her action practically amounts to self-abnegation—that the particular food upon which she most depends becomes so scarce that she would not find it possible to provide for herself and her family too, so that she resigns all unwillingly the sweet privileges of maternity to the foster-parents. Her young are so voracious that it is a hard matter for a pair of sparrows or titlarks to satisfy a single infant bird.



THE NIGHT-JAR

But here again too much, I think, is conceded to the supposed moral purpose and rectitude of the female cuckoo. She is an insectivorous bird, and she prefers for her young the nest of other insectivorous birds. But when a home is hard to find, or when she is too lazy to devote much time to the search, she will deposit them in the nests of seed- or fruit-eating birds ; and this diet supplied by them to their foster-child causes it to flourish equally well as when fed upon the natural caterpillar or insect

diet. If the cuckoo mother would make up her mind to eat commonplace food, and would not be such an epicure as to insist on nothing but choice live morsels, she could very well provide both for herself and her young, so that what naturalists try to make us believe to be self-sacrifice in her is obviously sheer laziness and unexampled greed.

One might be inclined to look for some saving grace in the young cuckoo of tender age; but Dr. Japp tells us that the fact is indisputable that he is as unscrupulous as his mother, for he murders his foster-brethren as soon as he has sense to perceive that they deprive him of food which would in their absence be all his. By the time he is three days old he has tilted the other young nestlings over the edge of the nest, together with any eggs which may remain there, using his back as a kind of shovel and his wings as hands. Verily it may be said of him that by a process of development he has actually become shapen in wickedness, for his back has taken a hollow form which enables him to accomplish this heartless operation with perfect ease.

But to return to the old cuckoos. If they are idle and greedy at laying time, they are simply barbarous when July comes and they make ready to migrate. The elder birds quit this country without the slightest regard for their offspring, who are not yet ready to fly. It seems as if this further characteristic was intended to put a final touch to the illustration of their general immorality, for I believe they are the only birds which leave

in the autumn without seeing their children safely started on the long journey to Africa. There are



YOUNG CUCKOO EJECTING HIS FOSTER-BRETHREN

persons who go so far as to assert that the older cuckoos are obliged to lay their eggs in alien nests and to leave to strangers the sustenance of their

young, because the time of their migration is so early that they could not perform these duties effectively, and therefore, purely from conscientious motives, they think it best not to attempt to perform them at all. These persons even compare the cuckoo favourably with the swift, whose migratory instinct in autumn is so strong that it sometimes leaves late broods to starve because it has a craving to be on the wing. "The mother cuckoo," they seem to say, "is a pattern of birds; rather than run any risk for her offspring she resigns the parental joys to which she is entitled. Could self-renunciation go farther?"

How is it that those birds in whose nests the cuckoo leaves her young do not detect the fraud and eject the egg or make another nest? There are many ornithologists who think that birds are so deficient in the senses of touch and smell that they cannot even perceive when they have been imposed upon. It has also been said, contrariwise, that the female cuckoo deposits in the nest that she has selected for her offspring a few of her own feathers before she leaves her egg, so that the foster-mother may become accustomed to the cuckoo smell, and will not detect any peculiarity in the egg when it is placed there. But there have been credible cases of such offence being taken at the intrusion that the victimised bird has actually built a new floor over the cuckoo's egg and left it to itself in the basement, while she has triumphantly brooded a new family on the first storey. This would surely show that she has possession of one of the senses which would enable her to detect the

fraud. Dr. Japp, for his part, declares that the senses of touch and smell in birds are very keen ; the coot, he tells us, will not sit upon ducks' eggs. And he narrates a story of an ornithologist who made experiments with a woodpecker's nest. He cut a circular piece out of the tree just below the nest and, extracting the woodpecker's egg, he substituted for it a thrush's egg. Then he filled up the hole with the bung, colouring it over exactly like the bark of the tree. The woodpecker stuck to her nest, and when she had laid four more eggs he took out the bung, and found that the thrush's egg had been rolled out of the nest into a recess, although the place was quite dark, and detection through the sense of sight must have been impossible.

If Nature has armed the coot and the woodpecker with a sense so keen as to prevent their incubating alien eggs, why has she not provided other smaller birds with this instinct? For them even more than for the larger birds it would seem an important gift, their nests being more liable to intrusion ; so that the coot and the woodpecker and a few others are given an instinct that is practically never called into exercise, while on birds which need this instinct more Nature has apparently failed to bestow it.

But Dr. Japp does not believe that Nature has treated these little birds badly. He thinks that their senses are no less keen than those of the others, and that for a few instances recorded of a bird building over a parasitical egg there are probably countless others which escape notice. If, as

some naturalists hold, the cuckoo lays five eggs or thereabouts, the balance of bird life in hitherto understood conditions would be so upset that the cuckoos would far outnumber the smaller birds and gradually, through ousting them, would entail their eventual disappearance. Yet the number of young cuckoos seen in a single season is not in excess of the old ones, and the obvious conclusion is that the smaller birds are not so stupid as they have been thought; that they know and dislike the intrusion of the cuckoo's egg; and that in innumerable instances resort has been had to the new storey in the house, and the parasitical egg has been carefully buried when it has not been turned out of the nest or destroyed.

But instinct seems to fail the small birds just where it might most reasonably be looked for. When the young cuckoo is hatched the foster-mother will starve herself to death rather than fail to supply its ravenous demands. And when she is dead the vociferant cries of the infant will attract neighbouring birds, so that they come and continue the supply, strangers though they are to the nestling. A cuckoo in confinement has been known to be fed by a wren, who brought food to the cage; and another, caged with some American blue robins, had only to open its mouth and one of the robins would drop all its tit-bits into the larger bird's capacious maw. So that it seems as though the instinct of certain species is proved to be of absolute use to another species which thrives to its detriment—a condition which Darwin asserted to be unknown. It is strange that one bird should be



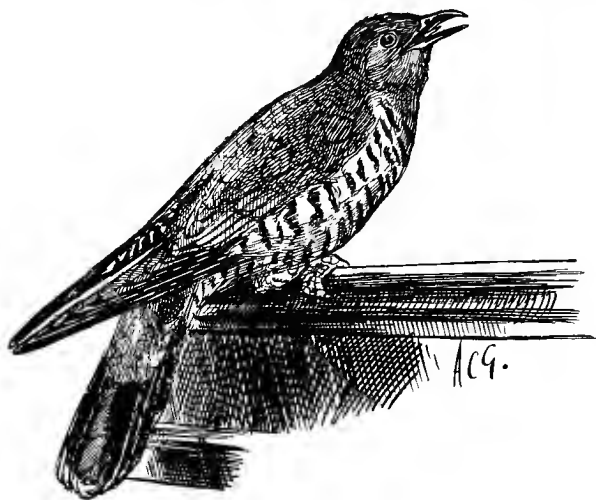
protected by another at its own expense, and that, as Goethe observed, from six to a dozen singing-birds may be sacrificed for a single cuckoo.

The fact is that the young monster, the intruded cuckoo, seems to exercise a fascination over the smaller birds, who lose all sense of protective duty to their young, and even to themselves, while they are apparently possessed of admiration and pride in the gluttonous interloper—so much larger and more insistent than any child they have hitherto reared.

It is an interesting question whether the young cuckoo learns its tribal song from instinct or whether its first chirp is that of its foster-parents. Evidence is sparse on the point, but it seems to lean to the side of the first contention, although an acute observer, Lord Lilford, brought evidence to bear which tends to support the contrary theory. He owned a young cuckoo from the time that it was taken from the nest until it was two years old, and its only song was a chirp, although it was once heard to make an attempt, which was a sad failure, at the normal cuckoo call. But, on the other hand, a certain Mr. Cochrane, a bird dealer of Edinburgh, was the possessor of a cuckoo which persistently sang its song through two summers. It had been taken from a meadow-pipit's nest in Wigtonshire, and was brought up by hand. Very soon it was tamed and became a family pet, being allowed considerable liberty in Mr. Cochrane's house. It ate food from the hand with perfect confidence, and must have been a voracious feeder, for it is recorded that at one sitting it had been known to consume seventy-three meal-worms. It would also enjoy

sultana raisins, meat, lettuce and other vegetables, young frogs, and hard-boiled eggs.

Its first moulting was in February, 1897, and one evening in the following April at about nine o'clock, when sitting on the fender and enjoying the heat of the fire, it began its cuckoo song. There had been no opportunity of learning from other cuckoos, for this one had been reared among parrots, canaries,



THE CUCKOO

and bullfinches. In July it ceased singing, and the migratory instinct was evidently strong, for it became exceedingly restless. After a time, however, it quieted down, moulted once more in February, and again in April began to sing, though this time less clearly than in the previous year. It was evidently in failing health, but up to the last its eye continued bright and its appetite unimpaired. It died in the autumn of 1898.

Another bird kept in confinement for over a year frequently attempted to make its onomatopœic call, but never got fairly beyond an indistinct first syllable. So that the little evidence obtainable on the subject is insufficient to settle the question whether the cuckoo's song is instinctive or imitative. More observation is needed to decide the point, and any evidence concerning it should be recorded, so that in time the matter may be set at rest. A great deal has been discovered of late years about the habits of the cuckoo, but much remains to discover, and I fancy that the better we know him—and perhaps more especially her—the less respect we shall have for the family in general. John Milton, who knew most things, had but a small opinion of the cuckoo, and doubtless could have instructed us on the subject; but he has refrained from any specific accusation, and in one of the most beautiful of his sonnets merely alludes to him as the “rude Bird of Hate,” and prays that he may not hear his song before he has listened to that of the nightingale, which will bring him the love for which he craves.

“O Nightingale, that on yon bloomy Spray  
Warbl'st at eve, when all the Woods are still,  
Thou with fresh hope the Lovers heart dost fill,  
While the jolly hours lead on propitious *May*,  
Thy liquid notes that close the eye of Day,  
First heard before the shallow Cuccoo's bill  
Portend success in love; O if *Jove's* will  
Have linkt that amorous power to thy soft lay,  
Now timely sing, ere the rude Bird of Hate  
Foretell my hopeles doom in som Grove ny:  
As thou from yeer to yeer hast sung too late  
For my relief; yet hadst no reason why,  
Whether the Muse, or Love call thee his mate,  
Both them I serve, and of their train am I.”

## MAY

*May* **W**E have had a day of unprecedented  
2. and unforeseen excitements.

Yesterday was May Day—not only the first day of May according to the calendar, but a real old-fashioned day of May revellings, such as our village must have known three hundred years ago. Jim and the Vicar are responsible for it, and, as a consequence, they both wear a flat and care-laden aspect this morning, which seems ominous of expected catastrophe. For my part the catastrophes which have already occurred seem sufficiently unpleasant to discourage further revelling.

It must be about two months since that Jim and I were paying a first visit to Mrs. Vicarius when our new Vicar broached his bright idea to us. He wanted to reinstitute old parish festivals, to have Twelfth Night commemorations, May Day junketings, beating the bounds, and half a dozen other parochial gaieties. He came in hot with his scheme and appealed to Jim, with whom he had already established a kind of friendship. It appears that Mr. Curtice chooses to call himself a mediævalist, and he besought Jim as a brother antiquary to support him. Jim is, of course, a

person who cannot be labelled, but it is impossible to deny that his life is spent in a period about two thousand years ago, and the idea of reverting to scenes of a mere three centuries past seemed the easiest thing in the world to him. Mrs. Vicarius protested, and I supported her in a half-hearted way; but the Vicar is a masterful man, and he gained his point in the end.

"It will be a great deal of trouble," she said.

"There are plenty who will share it," cried he.

"And very expensive."

"We shall get subscriptions. I don't anticipate any difficulty at all."

"You wouldn't, dear," said Mrs. Vicarius softly.

"But I don't see the object of it."

"The object is to provide amusement for the villagers. Why do they leave the country and go to live in towns? Because rural life is so dull and circumscribed. It was only yesterday that I was reading an article on the subject by one of our Berkshire historians. He said that the old revels infused poetic feeling into the villagers, and softened their manners, and prevented their growing hard and discontented. He said that the ancient festivals promoted good relations between rich and poor, between farmer and labourer. If we could help in a humble way to bring back the good old days of contentment in our rural population I should count no trouble too great."

He looked appealingly at Mrs. Curtice, who gave in at once. She would rather die than thwart her husband in a matter which she knows he has taken to heart.

So yesterday we had our revels, and very interesting they were in ways totally unexpected.

The Vicar and Jim were so determined to do the thing thoroughly that the latter actually produced an old Survey of the parish, *temp.* Edward VI., and attempted to trace out the revelling-place of former times. He decided that a field which bore the name of The Butts was probably the scene of ancient hilarity, and that it should also witness our modern revellings. It was near the village green for one thing, which made it a convenient resort; and, for another, it was surrounded by a high fence which allowed the *impresario* of the dramatic company to conduct rehearsals in privacy within its sheltered precincts. There was much trouble, which the promoters of the scheme tried to keep to themselves, in carrying through these rehearsals of their open-air play, *Robin Hood*. Of course I was told nothing about it by either Jim or the Vicar, but one of the actresses informed me in private of the agitation caused in the highest circles by the vagaries of Maid Marian, who persisted throughout in making love to Friar Tuck, instead of responding to the advances of her chartered lover.

Now Friar Tuck was in his rightful person the young brother of the Vicar, at home under a species of compulsion exercised by the authorities at Oxford, and it was easy to guess that he would not be slow to encourage Maid Marian in her naughtiness.

However, the day came at last, and brightly enough it broke. Jim had composed a May song,

made of double chants. He is peculiar in his musical tastes, and after Beethoven's sonatas, which satisfy him better than anything else in music, he prefers a good double chant. I am certain that I heard him one evening at his study piano trying to



MAID MARIAN AND FRIAR TUCK

make a part-song out of one of the sonatas, but in all probability he failed to adapt it comfortably to the words, which he had also composed, so he fell back upon a few of his favourite double chants, and fashioned quite a creditable madrigal out of them. The air had been played by village concertinas

under his tuition, sung at convivial meetings, and tootled by the juvenile drum-and-fife band until we were all familiar with it.

On the morning of May Day nothing but Jim's May song was heard in the village. So far the

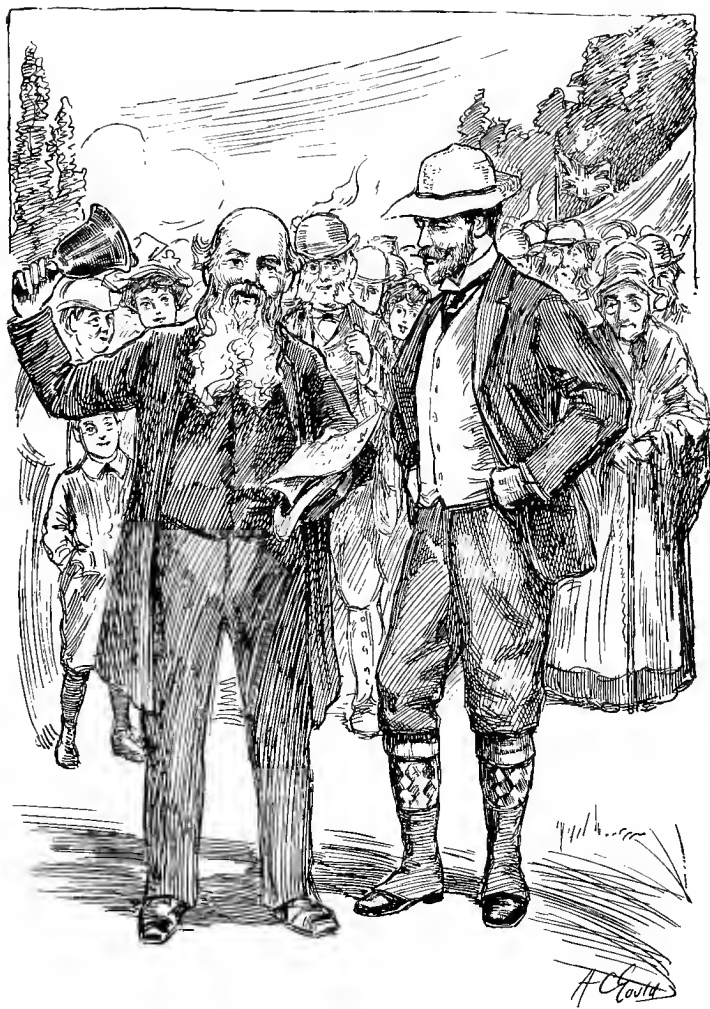


"WHAT DO HE SAY, BETTY?"

ALG

festival was a complete success. The revels proper were to begin immediately after the village dinner-hour. Punctually at two o'clock we assembled on the green, the parish clerk as bellman, dressed in our late Vicar's clerical garb, and the parish warden, Farmer Stubbs, as prompter, occupying prominent places beside Jim and Mr. Curtice.





THE PARISH CLERK AS BELLMAN



"Oyez ! Oyez ! Oyez !" cried the Vicar, with all the power of his particularly sound lungs.

"What do he say, Betty? What do he say?" asked deaf old Tummus Chalk of his deaf old wife.

"He be gone silly, sims to I," responded Betty sadly.

"Oyez ! Oyez ! Oyez ! We strictly charge and command that all persons here assembled do keep the peace upon pain of five pounds to be forfeited to the Lady of the Manor, and their bodies to be imprisoned at her pleasure. Also that no manner of person within these precincts do bear any bill, battle-axe, or other weapon. Also that no person do unseemly for any grudge or malice make perturbation or trouble upon pain of five pounds and their bodies—— What is the matter? Where are they going?"

For the crowd was melting away towards The Butts, with the exception of our little party and old Betty and Tummus.

"An' a very good sarmon too," said old Tummus in his cracked voice, with an attempt at consolation, "so fur as it went, 'wevver. An' I allus stands up fer thy sarmons, passon, whatever folks med say."

Betty shook him by the coat-sleeve.

"'Tent a sarmon," she bawled; "'tis summat dotty-like, wi' no sense in't. Don't say nowt or they'll visit it on 'ee. Come on home."

And they hobbled away across the green.

The rest of us followed the other revellers to The Butts, our enthusiasm dashed for the moment.

But the main interest of the day was to centre on the doings within the enclosed precincts of The

Butts, and when we had passed the turnstile a wonderful sight was ours. One end of the field had been made into a bower, and a part of it screened off by fences of green boughs into retiring rooms for the actors. In the bower the play was to be acted, while we of the outside public sat on the turf



THE CONSEQUENCES WERE OBVIOUS

and looked and listened. But surely something was amiss. The Vicar hurried to and fro, darting from one screened enclosure to another, and ribald sounds went up behind the scenes.

I never knew until afterwards what was wrong, and why the play came to an end or ever it had begun. It appears that although every maid in the village had been willing and eager to act a part, it

had been inordinately difficult to persuade any of the young men to join in the mumming. Jack Curtice, however, being himself a young man and knowing the ways of young men, had persuaded two rustic youths to accept the parts of Robin Hood and Little John by himself acting that of Friar Tuck, and—chiefest and most potent argument—by promising that in the Flax Piece adjoining The Butts there should lie concealed in a hollow oak a four-and-a-half-gallon cask of ale for the actors' refreshment. Unluckily Robin Hood and Little John had managed to broach this cask early in the day and without permission, and the consequences were obvious.

Jack Curtice walked Little John up and down the green-room while one of the bandsmen threw water at intervals into the young swain's face. Another bandsman had given up Robin Hood as hopeless, and rolled him into a corner.

"We med as well leave en in the carner till he comes to," he said ; "he wun't do no Robin Hoodin' to-day."

And eventually Little John went to share his corner, and for want of the two principal actors the play was declared off.

Time would fail me to tell of the day's catastrophes—of the ox, brought to draw the maypole to its place, which tried to gore Tommy Sandford, and did indeed ruin his best jacket, which Jim had to pay for ; of the tale of ducks and hens and a pig or two which fell to the bows and arrows of marksmen who were not satisfied with their legitimate target ; and of half a dozen other items not in the

programme as arranged by the promoters of the festival. The long day drew to its close at last, and I am certain that no one was more relieved than the Vicar when at last the strident concertina and the uncertain fiddle ceased their sound, and lights went out round the green, and the village slept. To-day we may discourse him of any subject in the wide world except revels—

“Crede experto—trust one who has tried.”

He is an ill subject when roused.



TOMMY SANDFORD

*May 14.* There is nothing in gardening that so much demands the eye and hand of the expert as the weeding of borders. I have a fair number of friends to whom I could quite happily trust my children, if I had any, and perhaps two or three to whom I could commit my dogs; but I cannot at this moment call to mind more than one whom I could without anxiety turn into my borders to weed them. Carelessness is the unpardonable sin surely, because it is the one that is absolutely curable through an effort of will. But it is not only through carelessness that ruth is done in the flower garden; there are many little plants known only to the planter

which are not sufficiently self-assertive to give the appearance of being entitled to their position, and because they are timid and small they are plucked up and cast away as worthless.

Early in May the thinning of annuals should be seen to, if it has not been done before, for nothing in flowers has so short a stay as the bed of annuals which suffers from overcrowding. Many things grown under glass can now be hardened, but this



DUCKS AND HENS, AND A PIG OR TWO

is a process which should be undertaken with some circumspection. To thrust boxes of petunias out suddenly into the external elements is a certain check to their career, and the hardening should be accomplished by slow degrees, first in a cold frame, closed at night, and afterwards through various stages of semi-protection culminating towards the end of the month in complete exposure. The time for planting them out cannot be determined except by experience. There may come a series of warm,

moist days at the end of May when the conditions are admirable for the purpose, or it may be nearly the middle of June before such a time appears. But the planting should be regulated by the weather, for nothing is more heartbreaking than to see withering under a hot sun the tender things which should have been introduced to their new quarters in more favouring circumstances. There are very few years in which the weather is not suitable at some time between May 24th and June 15th, and the wise gardener gets everything in readiness for the welcome rainy days, be they early or be they late, so that there shall be no hindrance when once Jupiter Pluvius has his turn at the weather-glass.

The roses will be getting liquid manure now for a few weeks, and this will not only help the buds at present forming, but will give the bushes strength to carry an autumn bloom. The worm in the bud is beginning to show itself, and for some time to come every plant will be hand-picked twice a week to get rid of the pest. I have not yet found any wash which will destroy them, but as regards the aphis, which also is appearing, the case is different. There are plenty of insecticides which will kill it, but I make a point of using Abol, because I feel myself under a debt of gratitude to the man who invented the Abol syringe. Every gardener has been betrayed many a time into expressions not becoming by the behaviour of the common syringe. It sprays everything except the object aimed at; it indulges in a back drip destructive of garments; it exhausts itself of water in about three seconds,



and the rose bushes have had practically none of it. But the Abol syringe knows how to behave itself ; it never comes back and looks you in the face and drenches you ; it goes direct to the object aimed at ; and above all it requires filling about one quarter as often as any other syringe which I have used. For by some clever contrivance the spray diffuses itself so gradually and so finely that nothing can escape it, and destruction comes upon the intruding insect whose undesired presence has threatened a dearth of roses.

Christmas roses in pots are being divided and replanted, as they had grown too much choked for good blooming, and arum lilies are being set out in manure trenches for the summer. There are many persons who succeed in getting good results from these callas by keeping them in pots, and only aiding them in the autumn with manure water. But the planting-out system is less troublesome, and in my experience more successful, though the flowers come a little later. They are taken up in September, and kept close for a few days in a frame until they have recovered the change, and then they go on merrily to their flowering season, making a whole winter beautiful.

How glorious are the yellow tree lupins in the wild garden ! They are not unsuited to large borders, but I like them best in the grass, because they look as if they belong there of right. Yet their lease of life is sadly short, for I have not known one to live longer than five or six years. I should like to know whether in California, whence they have come to us, their life is so brief, or

whether the conditions they meet with under culture, the richness of the ground they inhabit, and the general care they receive, lead to the too profuse bearing of blossom and of seed pod, which seems to weaken and in time to destroy them. It is certainly not a hard winter which kills them, for they may survive three or four such winters to waste away in a mild one. But however disappointing they may be in this respect they are of the things which no keen gardener can dispense with, and as they are fairly easy raised from seed, and as a plant in its second year may range in height from two to four or even more feet, and be covered with masses of its glorious bean-scented flowers, there is no difficulty in keeping up the supply by means of an annual sowing. They like a light soil and a sunny position and a stake to keep them steady when rough winds blow.

Some of the plants which look most promising in the wild garden are the scarlet avens, or *geum*, the Nankeen poppy, the common yellow potentilla, and the old-fashioned columbine. Various dianthus, such as that called *deltoides*, and the pheasant-eye pink are doing admirably and have much promise of blossom. Irises raised from seed are coming up well, but they do not thrive in the grass as I should like to see them, judging by their sparse bloom. The oriental poppies are showing great swelling buds. It strikes me ever anew that the ideal gardening is wild gardening, when it can be managed after Nature's patterns, and the little bit of it that I can delight in is a happier thing than any patches of florists' flowers that make

my borders gay. Perhaps this is because in wild gardening the gardener has necessarily to be simple. He who would plant carefully hybridised things in the grass and expect to see them thrive would be a foolish person ; so type flowers are chosen which cannot revert to any lower stage of existence because they are still as Nature made them, and the result is as though she herself had planted them, exotics though they may be.

One of our most noxious weeds in the eyes of Sterculus is very useful for grouping with cut



WHITE WEED IN A GROVE

flowers. This is the common white weed, or sheep's parsley. Its foliage mingles well with garden blossoms, and its great heads of tiny flowers are very effective later in vases in combination with such large blooms as those of the oriental poppy, the pæony, and pyrethrum. Another flower excellent for the purpose is the bulbous saxifrage, which is plentiful hereabouts, and is nearly as pretty as its diminutive relative the London pride. Other plants which grow wild in the orchard are the water avens, the adder's-tongue fern, the twae-

blade, various common orchids, cuckoo flowers, and ox-eyed daisies. Nature set them all in this little corner.

The most brilliant flowers in the garden are still bulbs—the flaunting parrot tulips; and mingled with them are multitudes of poet's narcissus, which are quite as beautiful, though not so gay. Some of these last are also growing thinly in the grass with cowslips between, and here and there a white wood hyacinth; the harmony of tender tints is very pleasant among the cool green. But the place that best suits the cowslips is the moist ground of the lowest bed in the rose garden, where, plentifully nourished and kept cool and slightly shaded by standard trees, they grow very large and brighter in tint than elsewhere, the green calyx being especially vivid.

*May 20.* At the end of the month, when the wallflowers are cleared away from the sheltered beds beneath the windows of the house, portulaca is sown all along the edge in a wide border, and such things as will thrive in so dry a place are planted behind it. It is an undesirable arrangement, ugly and displeasing, because it is always artificial in appearance. The flowers complain in unmistakable flower language that they have been bedded out for the summer in a place where no others will thrive, instead of being provided with quarters where they may live in peace and die when old age comes to them. There is no getting away from the fact that they have not any abiding place, so there is little pleasure to be gained from them, but only the conventional covering of a border which would otherwise be bare.

The lily disease has attacked most of the Madonna lilies again this year. I see that certain authorities who have studied the disease, which they call *Botrytis cinerea*, say that it is caused by a fungus closely related to that of the potato disease. The large spores produce other spores with hair-like tails, which can sail about in water. No remedy is known for the plague, and the only thing to be done when a plant is affected is to cut the stem down and burn it, to prevent contamination to others. I believe that if the bulbs are taken up when they are ripe and kept in a bag with flour of sulphur for a little time before replanting, they will be likely to resist the disease the following year. It has been stated that this disease attacks only those lilies which have been imported ; certainly it is the case that a few of mine which came some years since from a cottage garden have never suffered from it, while others bought from various salesmen have been struck down year after year, and never seem safe.

One of the last duties of the month is the arranging of hanging baskets for the sheltered entrance to the house which is always dignified by the name of verandah. Departure from conventional arrangements for these is not desirable ; I have tried many and have failed in every one. And, after all, there is nothing more suitable for these baskets than the common pelargonium with hanging sprays of blue lobelia, or tendrils of ivy pelargoniums. These things are in their right position for the summer season when they are used to fill tubs and baskets, where they never look out

of place, because they are well suited to their abode. They last even throughout the autumn, and are always gay, provided that they are regularly watered, for the soil is necessarily limited, and daily attention is needed.

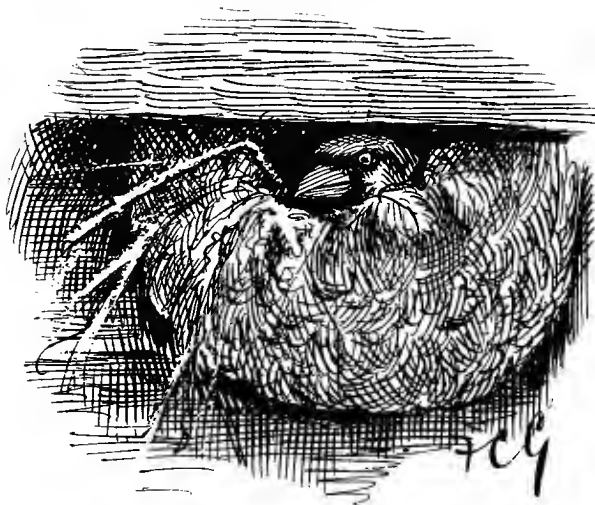
*May 28.* This is the first day of summer. One might almost say that it is the first day of spring, for that warm week in April is so long past that it hardly counts in one's memory of pleasant days. The sparrows, those most unprincipled of jerry-



TUBS AND HANGING BASKETS

builders, are making new nests, and in one or two instances are taking forcible possession of the swallows' tenements. Possibly they have suffered from the rains in their early abodes. For the cold, wet spring I am grateful, since in this garden we are apt to suffer from drought. We are overdrained by Nature, which has set us on a southern slope, and by necessity, which has demanded a certain amount of terracing to allow of a croquet ground.

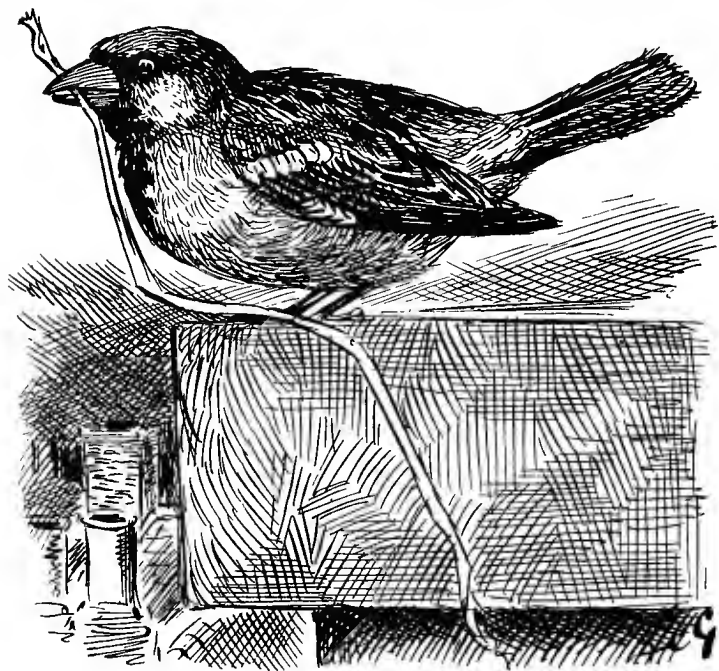
It is a good year for grass; the rains have assured that. From the seat under the upper elm one may see how luxuriantly it grows just below. The poet's narcissus can only just look over the feathery tops, and a scarlet oriental poppy blossom has but a trifle more advantage. It is one of last year's seedlings, and is the first in bloom in the garden this year. I am anxious to see if they



AN INTRUDER

will hold their own permanently among the grass. I am feeling a little sorry that I planted such a large mass of the old yellow doricum in the wild garden, for now that the buttercups are in flower it is not very telling; but it was too encroaching to be left in the borders, and a place elsewhere had to be found for it. *D. Harpur Crewe* is better for cutting, and in habit is more satisfactory, but it also is in the wild garden on account of its early habit.

The summer borders are quite a fortnight later than they should be. There is very little show at present—nothing, in fact, beyond the parrot tulips and one or two herbaceous things such as the rosy pyrethrums, *geum miniatum*, which seems to be earlier than *G. chilense*, and the pretty little



THE JERRY-BUILDER

carpet plant which we call Bouncing Bet, though properly speaking it is *saponaria ocymoides*. Many things are ready to burst into flower, but are coy through persistent night frosts.

The first sweet peas are in bloom to-day—a fortnight before their time by a happy accident. In the early winter we found that a goodly number of seeds



which had been taken in for drying had sown themselves and made an inch or two of growth under the greenhouse stage. So we potted them, and kept them in a cold frame, until a period of warm weather in early April made it possible to turn them into the open ground, and they are now rewarding us for our care by giving their sweet blossoms before we have any right to expect them.

Somebody said the other day that life is made up half of boredom and half of unpleasant surprises. Nevertheless, I am having several pleasant surprises in my borders this spring. Part of my business is to keep these borders weeded, but as they require attention in this respect several times in the early spring, I am obliged, though it is against my principles, occasionally to depute this duty to Thomas, with strict injunctions to pluck up nothing that he could have a doubt about. Evidently the garden boy is not troubled with doubts, for in ensuing summers I have grieved over my losses, though attributing them to the rigours of the preceding winter. This spring, however, I have done all my weeding myself, and am surprised to come upon friends that I had given up for lost. Here is a *romneya coulteri* planted three years ago. It did not bloom in its first summer, and its head was doubtless plucked off as a weed for two good springs, for my eyes have not beheld it for that period. There are also two or three statices in places where statices are not used to be; their early growth might certainly be mistaken for that of the dock, so the garden boy is held partly excused as regards them. The same might be said for the

beautiful dwarf white evening primrose (*œnothera taraxacifolia*), whose dandelion-like foliage ensures its being pulled away in mistaken kindness even by passing friends, so that out of my original large stock raised from seed I now possess only a few plants. The thistle-like morina, for this same reason, has never lived through a summer in my garden, though I have planted several specimens at different times. I shall have to put a neat little paling, made of wooden labels, round these plants, with the inscription, "Trespassers will be prosecuted"; but even then I should despair of Thomas's amendment. A garden boy who, when you point to a handful of cherished plants withering on the grass, can do naught but laugh at the good joke is obviously beyond reformation.

I wonder if people in general notice how inferior is the song of some nightingales to that of others. The principal bird who inhabits our grove this spring is a very poor singer. When he attempts the delightful *jug-jug* he makes a sorry failure of it, and even his common notes are as naught in comparison with those of last year's birds. The cold weather may possibly have something to do with it, but I do not think so, for we have now had four hot days and nights, and still his note is a feeble travesty of the song of other days. In spite of a month of cool, wet weather these four days make the garden cry out again for rain. I wonder if anything is due to the original making of the borders some years since; and yet how hard we worked to get them right! We dug out their whole length to a depth of over two feet; the

substratum of gravel which we came upon at one point was removed, and good soil substituted for it. The clay substratum (nowhere within eighteen inches of the surface) in another place we tempered with lighter stuff. No pains were spared at the beginning so far as our knowledge served. I cannot help believing that we did the best that could be



THE NIGHTINGALE

done, and that the contour of the ground is more to be blamed than we. One pays penalties after all for "laying warm," as *Sterculus* puts it, and having a natural drainage.

A quantity of Dobbie's white spiral candytuft, sown almost at random a year ago in odd corners of the borders, failed to germinate in last summer's drought, and has now come up and is bursting into beautiful bloom. It is wonderful how much hand-

somer it is than spring-sown stuff. *Clarkia* and *godetia* under similar conditions are also doing well. *Viola cornuta* in two or three shades—a flower which, as a carpet plant properly placed under things of upright growth, I regard as one of the prettiest in the garden—is looking charming, as it always does at this time. Early in July, when it gets a little shabby, we shall clip it over, and it will bloom again in the autumn. Nearly all the tufts were killed by the heat last summer, but it is a thing impossible to get rid of, and it is rapidly forming new masses from self-sown seed. These young plants should bloom in September or even sooner.

I have a friend called Petunia who lives not very far away, and comes often to see me. She is young and pretty and altogether charming, but—— Well, I have noticed that a “but” generally appears in a woman’s description of her best friends, and there is no need to particularise. The “but” in Petunia’s case is not entirely irrelevant to her method of mismanaging her love affairs, which she seems to have accomplished of late with complete success. Yet while willing and even anxious to seek sympathy, she deprecates the smallest approach to advice from her confidants, of whom she has more than one or two. Moreover, as she never succeeds in expressing her position very clearly, always keeping in reserve some fact which might damage her in the opinion of her listener, it is sometimes a little difficult to follow her story and to share her point of view. It seems as if she has not strength to carry alone the



PETUNIA



burden which she is yet too coy or too unwilling to share with another.

Petunia has bicycled over again to-day, the second time within the week, and it is easy to see that she is brimming with the desire to tell me something. The only way to meet her is with a complete absence of inquisitiveness, which is the most trying and embarrassing to her of all the various fronts which one can present. How happy she is if her friend and confidant of the moment will say, "Petunia, darling, tell me what is on your mind"; or, "Dear Petunia, you are looking a little unhappy to-day!" But no one who really knew Petunia would be foolish enough to adopt such elementary tactics as these, which lead to much circumlocution on her part, and not a little self-pity. So we talk indifferently about apple blossom, or about the effect of late spring frost on the strawberries, and we discuss the respective demerits of the brown and the black slug. And all the time I know that I shall presently yield to her mood out of sheer good nature, and shall hear myself saying, "Petunia, darling, tell me what is troubling you."

She ate a very good luncheon, looking the picture of misery throughout the meal. Afterwards she indulged in a larger quantity than usual of peppermint creams, only holding her hand when I remarked that I considered peppermint exhilarating. Then she asked what was the most remarkable instance of patient silent agony that had ever come under my notice. I assured her that nothing of the kind had ever struck me more forcibly than the sight of a lean countryman whom I had seen one even-

ing at the close of the fortnightly sheep fair in the neighbouring village of Ilsley. The day was done,



A LEAN COUNTRYMAN

the customers were departing, and his sheep were unsold. She said dreamily that she was not thinking about sheep, and then she quoted Longfellow—







SHE SAID IT WAS TIME TO GO

Petunia's poetical taste is not of the highest order—and remembered to sigh at the right moment. She said she thought the "Psalm of Life" the truest picture ever painted of a woman's heart. She said she was convinced that the sublimest thing in the world was suffering and being strong. I cordially agreed with her, and instanced my persistent *romneya coulteri*. She remarked sadly that a woman's heart was of more value than any *romneya coulteri*. I replied that something might depend upon the state of the heart. She said she supposed it was time to go, and then she sat down again, and I knew that neither jest nor insult would dislodge her until she had unburdened herself; so I made haste to say once more the words I have so often repeated in these last months, "Petunia, dearest, tell me what is troubling you."

Of course, I knew very well what was troubling her. I could not be certain of its name, for this is subject to chances and changes, but I can always sketch in as a preliminary the bare facts and outline of the story. Although there may be boredom for me, there will be no surprises in Petunia's narrative.

It appears that her Mr. Mumby of the moment, whom she has adored for over three weeks, went away yesterday without telling his love. I do not quite grasp whether this is the original Mr. Mumby, or another Mr. Mumby, or yet again a different person with Mumby-like charms, but the name in any case will serve as a generic term, though if I had been Petunia I should have chosen a better while I was about it. I do not like to inquire too

closely into the situation, for sometimes when she is telling me about one of her Mr. Mumbys I am thinking of polyanthuses, or of rose grubs, or of some other more interesting subject, and it does not do to hark back, for this infuriates Petunia. Not to listen attentively to her tales of woe is a thing almost unpardonable, but to forget the smallest detail of them is an insult. So I listen and sympathise and refrain from coming to close quarters in the matter, and I hear a pathetic tale of love and anguish. It is exactly the same narrative that she told me some few months ago with the immaterial difference of a substitution of one principal character in the drama for another. But Petunia does not detect the resemblance. She goes home at last with a huge bunch of china roses, and with a face as long as her arm, which is saying much, and I am able to turn again with a sigh of relief to my garden and my books.

I have just been enjoying that poem of perennial interest and delightful humour, "Caliban upon Setebos," which, every time I read it, gives me fresh pleasure and new suggestions for its complete appreciation. Setebos is the evil genius of gardens. He has all the attributes for the part, and it is surprising that Caliban did not discover this; but probably he did not only because he could not be trusted to work in Miranda's garden. If he had been permitted to do so he would have discovered another side to the malignity of Setebos to confide to us. Poor Caliban! He takes half a winter to weave a wattle fence which will stop the she-tortoises as they crawl up the sand, and let him secure

their eggs for his feast. The sea gets up under a kick from Setebos, and

“ . . . licks the whole labour flat.”

He takes pattern from his tormentor ; he sees twenty crabs pass safely to the sea, and stones the twenty-first. So Setebos ! He sees a bruised one and gives it waywardly a worm ; one whose nippers end in red, and gives it two worms. So he ! The caprice of the little god is repeated in the mere mortal, who visits on those weaker than himself the indignities which he has first suffered. Our Setebos of the garden vexes us fully as much as Caliban's of the island vexed him—

“When all goes right, in this safe summer time,  
And he wants little, hungers, aches not much,  
Then, trying what to do with wit and strength,  
Falls to make something.”

Our Setebos is ingenious. He makes a beautiful plant and sets it in the border. The gardener sees it and knows it for a stranger, and looks for blossom, thinking that he has planted it in the autumn and forgotten to note it in his book. It thrives as no other plant in the garden has thriven ; in a single season it has increased from a tiny leaflet to a large clump. It is above everything a “good doer.” Late in summer, after much cherishing, it blossoms, and proves to be a spurge or a yarrow of the meanest sort. So Setebos !

He is malignant. He waits until the delphiniums are safely above ground, and then he teases the large black slugs and the small brown slugs, till they leave the herbage of the orchard, which in reality they like better than anything else, and

make a meal off the growing tufts in the borders. He taunts the sparrows till they nip off the green tips of the sweet peas just coming out of the ground, and leave them exposed to view, for they do not care to eat them. He has been known to incite garden boys to the plucking up of choice plants, which he sily insinuates to be weeds of loathly sort. He incites the village donkey to bray against its better nature ; and, when we have planted out our seedlings on the strength of the welcome music, we see them fading for weeks under the brilliant unwinking sun, which kills them before they can get established. So Setebos !

Let us hope with Caliban that some day the Quiet may catch and destroy Setebos, or that likelier he—

“Decrepit may doze, doze, as good as die,”

for we shall never have satisfactory gardens until this happy day arrives.

## JUNE

*June* 15. **T**HERE are a good many small items of work which, while not seeming very important, yet require attention at this time from the far-seeing gardener. If the pansies sown and transplanted last autumn are to continue their flowering season throughout the summer, they must be mulched soon with old manure ; so treated they will carry blossoms until winter. Lilacs have to be pruned, the longest shoots which have bloomed being cut out and carried away to the rubbish heap, whence, in the form of ashes, they will return later to the land. Phloxes and delphiniums must be staked, although at present they do not seem to require it ; cuttings must be taken of pinks, if the wood is firm enough, and struck under hand-lights in good soil ; wallflowers must be pricked out from the seed-beds into larger quarters, where they can stand several inches apart, to ensure their making good plants by the time October comes, and with October their final planting. The strong tap roots should be pinched off, and a good bunch of fibrous roots will take their place and make them more able to endure winter frosts. The green tops of bulbs which have not yet died down may, for the

most part, be removed, even though they are still a little green ; and the rose-beds in which they are planted should be forked over with a four-inch hand fork, an operation easily undertaken by the garden boy. Air and dew will thus enter freely and penetrate the soil.

If the sowing of hardy perennials has not hitherto been done, this month is not too late to get fairly good plants from seed, provided that watering is properly attended to. There are few that cannot now be sown in the open, although some kinds, such as the sea hollies, auriculas, and others, need boxes, because their period of germination is long, and they are apt to be forgotten if they remain unseen in the earth for many months. I have kept a few late things, such as the Chinese dianthus and spring-sown snapdragons, in four-inch pots, to fill gaps in the borders ; and now that the oriental poppies have nearly finished flowering they will be cut down level with the ground, and these pot plants will be put near and around the roots. Pyrethrums may be treated in the same way as the poppies, but it is not advisable to behave so brutally to most early-flowering plants, for some of the weaker-growing perennials would resent their temporary extinction, and would probably make it a permanent one.

The fancy pelargoniums are getting near their time of rest, and must soon be cut back and prepared for next year's flowering. They are reduced to the hard wood ; the ball is also made smaller, and the plants are set out in a cool frame in clean pots. New plants are raised from some of



the cuttings, but our house room being limited we cannot grow a large number, so most of the stuff goes to the rubbish heap.



CLIMBING ROSES

Climbing roses are making the house-front gay just now. They are in full bloom—Lamarck, Gloire de Dijon, Cheshunt hybrid, l'Idéal, Bouquet

d'or, and Reine Marie Henriette. The last, which is among the most useful of all, should be grown on a comparatively cool wall, such as one with an aspect due west. Perpetual sunburn is fatal to its colour in very hot weather, and the ideal place for it is under glass, where, in spring, it comes best and brightest. Cheshunt hybrid also, though perfect in the bud, is always disappointing when fully expanded. Bouquet d'or is a glorified Gloire, with a slightly yellower flower and a perfectly formed bud. There are one or two early Eugen Fürsts in the rose-beds, for these are the pioneers of the hybrid perpetuals. I am always telling myself how sorry I am that I have but one bed of chinas; but except for their long-flowering habit I do not care for them, my first necessity in roses being those which will live longest in water, and are therefore well suited for cutting.

The borders are looking gay, though not yet in full beauty. I am short of various old favourites this year, noticeably Canterbury bells, *linum narbonneuse*, which appears to have been destroyed by the wet winter, and gaillardias, which probably disliked it even more than the linum. One thing which I decide every autumn to banish entirely from the borders to the wild garden, and cling to devotedly every summer, is the lovely blue alkanet (*anchusa italica*). It is quite as beautiful in colour as any delphinium, and far more persistent in bloom. It is now in full glory, and I feel that I would rather die than be without it. In August, when it is lolling over two or three yards of soil belonging to other plants, I feel that not I but it must die, or be banished at any rate to the grass,



THE BORDERS ARE LOOKING GAY



where already there is a considerable colony of it, for it does admirably amongst the herbage.

One thing I must get for my borders before another June, and that is a judicious selection of plants of a good full yellow colour. At this moment there is no brilliant yellow in them except *eschscholtzias* and Iceland poppies, which are only annuals, and therefore not to be relied on after a hard winter. The Nankeen poppy is very lovely in its salmon-apricot tint, but it does not satisfy the eye-craving for yellow. My first and chief desire is for brilliant gentian blues; pinks and crimsons are essential, and come without effort, as does also white; violets and magentas have to be allowed only sparingly and under protest, as it were; true scarlets and real coral pinks are absolutely necessary, and deserve encouragement. But a real good lemon yellow at this time of year is more scarce than a true blue, and is quite as great a treasure, which is saying much.

For a June edging I know nothing prettier than the *pentstemon procerus* at the back, and the big white rayless viola, or tufted pansy, as they call it nowadays, widely massed in front. For a large round bed, with *coreopsis grandiflora* all over the centre, it would be quite suitable; for, although the pentstemon goes out of bloom by the end of the month, the violas remain and look beautifully harmonious with the coreopsis through the rest of the summer. This coreopsis would be a perfect plant if it were a true perennial. It is very free flowering, most persistent, handsome, and useful for cutting. Sometimes it will throw out side growths

which ensure its blooming the following year ; but more often it has only the life of a biennial, and disappears after flowering. However, it is easily raised from seed, and the sowing of such a good thing in the seed-patch should be as much a matter of course as the sowing of the indispensable wall-flower. I find here that it distributes itself and forms colonies all round the parent plants, which is the easiest and pleasantest solution of the problem of its culture. *Pentstemon procerus*, like many type pentstemons, cannot endure to be suffocated by other plants at any period of its growth. The exquisite *P. cyananthus* (var. *Brandegii*) is just coming into full bloom, and has the true blue colour so valuable in gardens. I am trying *P. Jaffrayanus*, which is well spoken of, but have not seen it in flower yet. I find that most pentstemons take a fairly long time to establish themselves.

What a perfect flower is the *clematis languinosa*, Lady Caroline Nevill ! It is too dwarf for a wall, and I should like to try it pegged down between plants of Mrs. Sinkins pinks. I think that for once I should have a conventional arrangement of some sort, with the pinks used for outlining, and the clematis in large plots for filling in. Then planted thickly among the clematis there should be quantities of tritonias, which would follow Lady Caroline in blooming, the foliage of the pinks when the flowers were over being sufficiently beautiful in itself to hold its own in the later picture. I find *tritonia crocosmiæflora* perfectly hardy, but *T. Pottsi* dies in a winter alternately cold and wet. The former is very satisfactory and

increases quickly ; the bulbs also are cheap, which is an additional point in their favour.

The yellow tree lupin is now in its glory, and a beautiful thing it is. These were grown from seed, and have made good plants in a couple of years. I find that the seed should be sown plentifully, for some of it fails to germinate. Tree lupins appear to flower only on the wood of the previous year, and their golden wreaths resemble laburnum set the wrong way up ; but they are at least three times as enduring when cut as that lovely golden chain. I have seeds of a new white variety this season, which I am trying ; it cannot exceed the yellow in beauty, but there is room enough in gardens for more than one good thing.

*June 24.* How hideous is the country on a sunless day in June. Here, where we are apt to look for glorious distances and wooded vistas, this is particularly noticeable. In place of spring's variety of tints the eye travels for miles over a mass of dull metallic green, devoid both of charm of colour and beauty of form. The trees are in full leaf, and show no bright interstices ; they are as lumpy as cabbages. The fields in their flat colouring carry out the unpleasing scheme, for the young corn is still as green as the water meadows. Next month we shall at least get relief for the eye in the ripening grain, and by August we may hope for some variety in the tree foliage again, though not much. At present the only charm is in the help which the sun gives to the landscape, with its strong contrast of light and shade and its varying cloud shadows. On a grey day this help is withheld, and all is flat monotony of metallic green again. Luckily the one

month which is ugly outside the garden is the most beautiful of all within it. The green is tempered with other tints; the trees near by are intimate friends, and we know what lies under their thick, plain faces. We love them because we live with them, and we do not expect them always to wear their prettiest clothing for us. But with other distant trees which are strangers to us, or at best only casual acquaintances, we feel no necessity to endure their ugliness with patience, and we naturally resent it when we can find no delight for the eye in them. The æsthetic craving is unsatisfied, and the soul within the stranger is not intimate enough with our soul to react upon and inspire it.

But wherever else there may be disappointment, there is always something to charm in the orchard. The flowers, even at this season, which is their best, seem scarce and stingily distributed compared with those in the beds, but is it not this which gives them that look of Nature's planting which can never be amiss? What surprises me most is the perennial habit which the Canterbury bells seem to acquire in the grass; they never fail to reappear in each succeeding summer, though they receive no attention in any way nor encouragement, such as they get in the garden proper. Some of the most satisfactory and attractive colonies in the grass are formed of the following :—

Sweet-william,	Perennial lupin,
Doronicum,	Oriental poppy,
Italian alkanet,	Comfrey,
Blue flax,	Columbine,
Single rocket,	Scarlet avens,
Pheasant-eye pink,	Foxglove,
Single yellow potentilla,	Borage.





FLOWERS IN THE GRASS



There is, besides, a beautiful plant whose botanical name is *crambe cordifolia*. It stands from three to four feet in height, and is covered with clouds of white flowers somewhat resembling the bulbous saxifrage in shape and size. It will hold its own in the grass if a suitable station is prepared for it.

We have had a week of intense and airless heat after a fortnight of windy heat. I believe the mysterious instrument called a hygrometer measures more moisture in the air than it did



HAYMAKERS

a few days since, but it is still hardly beyond normal. Yet the sound of trains to the south is very distinct ; a donkey is braying in the village below ; smoke is blowing down from the chimneys on to the lawn ; the swallows are flying lower ; the moon will change to-morrow—so surely we are to get rain at last. Things are beginning to show signs of distress for want of it, and peas would really begin to fatten and strawberries to swell more quickly if we could get half an inch or so. But it has been a glorious season for the haymakers.

*June 28.* The welcome rain has come, and we

are rejoicing in it in terribly selfish fashion, for are there not many acres of grass still lying uncarried and almost as many left uncut? I pointed out to Sterculus this morning that our joy should be chastened by this remembrance, but he was quite unmoved and unsympathising. "We cain't eat hay," he says, as he hugs himself in his own peculiar way while surveying his fat pea-pods and his newly planted lettuces. He is the more pleased because he prophesied this welcome change; but Sterculus's habit of prophecy leaves room for so much later hedging that we do not often pay great attention to it. "I don't say 'twill rain to-day, and I don't say 'twill rain to-morrow; what I say is, 'twill rain," is his usual formula, and even we lesser mortals feel that we could sometimes get as near prophecy by a happy accident.

I have adopted some of the suggestions contained in Mr. William Robinson's *English Flower Garden* with very happy results—those, I mean, which refer to the growing of successional groups of flowers in the borders. A patch of ground, for instance, which in early summer is gay with blue forget-me-not is later in the year a mass of tritonia. The nodding star of Bethlehem gives place at this time to the white creeping evening primrose, which blooms for the rest of the summer. Spanish irises come up and flower in a glaucous-coloured carpet of *zauschneria californica*, which is later than most things in coming into blossom. Madonna lilies are planted with pyrethrums or with oriental poppies, and succeed them with only a few days' interval between. I

greatly dislike bare earth between my clumps, and so far as possible dwarf plants are encouraged to grow amongst the taller ones, to the vast improvement of the border's appearance. One makes mistakes no doubt at times, and the carpet is often of a sort that will smother its companions as they come up in the spring; but experience is the only guide worth trusting, and it is better to learn for oneself that *saponaria ocymoides* will not suffer antirrhinums to emerge safely through its twiggy growth with the power of doing their best than merely to read this in a book and take it for an incontrovertible fact. One learns a great deal more than a mere little detail about gardening from every mistake which one makes in the growing of plants.

I am an occasional reader of the new fiction known by the name of Garden Literature, and of all the books of this kind which I have seen I like best *Elizabeth and her German Garden*. One is learning that it is idle to look for instruction in flower culture in these books, and it is no disappointment to discover that Elizabeth's book frankly concerns Elizabeth and nothing else. Her garden, though it appears on the title-page and on many another page of the volume, is obviously incidental, and even the Man of Wrath partakes of this nature as well as the April, May, and June babies. One is fain to realise that although Elizabeth may be rather fond of them, she could very well reconcile herself to life without them. She is profoundly interesting to herself as well as to the reader, and her volume is the Book of Elizabeth with

a German garden and a few other necessary impedimenta thrown in. Her garden experiences are not illuminating, and may be dismissed in a few words, for there is little of a horticultural nature to be learnt from Elizabeth. To be sure we hear much of sweet peas, rockets, roses bought by the hundred, hollyhocks, pansies, and other subjects. But never a word does she tell us of their culture, and for aught that we can learn from her we might treat all these things alike, and suffer accordingly. Elizabeth would never check us in our foolishness, though she would make many a jest at it, for nothing is sacred from her ribaldry.

Elizabeth is distinctly a minx. I thought the character was extinct, for it disappeared from our literature quite suddenly about the time that the purpose-novel came into vogue. There was not room enough in fiction for both types of heroine. But the minx was not extinct; she was merely suffering from boredom, and had gone into retirement for a time, to re-emerge brilliantly from the recesses of a German garden. And the absolute certainty that there are April, May, and June minxes being brought up to follow in her chartered footsteps may relieve us from any fear that the type will be lost again.

Elizabeth is English to the backbone, despite her artful attempts to persuade us otherwise. She is amusing in describing her adopted compatriots, and enjoys many a laugh at their expense. She is certain that Dr. Grill must be a German rose, because the more attention you pay him the ruder will he be to you, or, in other words, the less will he

repay your kindness by expansion. But there are very few things and fewer persons for whom Elizabeth has a word of praise, and the only friend whom she can endure is one who is clever enough to flatter her about her garden. To others she is inwardly cold and critical, with a charming affectation of pleasantness which would not deceive a baby. She dislikes Minora most of all, and is only well disposed to her visitor when she notices her thick wrists. The fact is that Minora has a beautiful nose; and although Elizabeth would rather die than own herself jealous, it is obvious to the meanest capacity that this is what ails her. The admirable Miss Jones also, whose perfect propriety of demeanour is assumed through a rigid sense of duty, rouses all her wrath. But what was there, in the name of justice, to complain of in Miss Jones? That she had but small respect for her employer should not in itself have formed a legitimate grievance, since not even a nursery governess can control her inward feelings; and even Elizabeth admits that Miss Jones's outward expression was severely perfect. And to her bosom friend Irais Elizabeth is simply diabolical when she thinks that that friend is trespassing a little too long on her hospitality. She makes no secret of her opinion that the weeks her guests are with her is time lost so far as her pleasure is concerned, and even goes so far as to say that it rejoices her as much to see them go as to see them come. I am certain that it rejoices her far more.

The truth of the matter is that our good Elizabeth has no wholesome illusions; glamour is unknown

to her ; the bump of reverence is wanting. The Man of Wrath, who should surely be sacred, escapes her scorn no more than the others, and furnishes her with many an opportunity for jibes. I am positive that she has failed to bend him to her imperious will, as she would fain bend all with whom she comes into contact. She has certainly not cured him of holding his glass in his left hand, and she bears him a perennial grudge in consequence.

At the moment when I begin to wonder if there is any person in the world for whom she really cares, it is a relief to find her confessing that she likes her coachman almost as much as her sundial ; but it turns out that that is only because he never attempts to thwart any of her unreasonable wishes. She hates giving presents, lest the recipient shall be spoilt and she shall suffer in consequence. She has an eccentric dislike to furniture, though I am convinced that she would be the first to cry out if she had not enough of it, or if her armchair was not comfortable, or if her presses were not large enough to hold her frocks. But there is no pleasing her. Things animate and inanimate alike annoy her, and the one person who is in her eyes entirely charming is Elizabeth.

And indeed she is not very far wrong. She is a fascinating being, and Jim, who recommended the book to me, finds it difficult to endure with equanimity the thought that the Man of Wrath has attained by right of conquest the privilege of her constant companionship. She will always interest the Man of Wrath ; she will never—though the



days may come of grey hair and wrinkles—she will even then never bore him. She will keep his affection to her dying hour, however flagrantly she may deserve to lose it ; but one cherishes a secret though perhaps unworthy joy in the assurance that inordinately as he may adore her, he will never let her know it. Is he not a German husband, closely connected in his modes of action with that Dr. Grill who rouses Elizabeth's ire ? When she puts forth her fascinations the Man of Wrath will retire with well-affected indifference to his series of smoky dens in the south-east corner of the house. When she holds forth on the superiority of the sex he will smile blandly down on her, talking her at last into passionate flight. He dominates her by sheer strength as well as by the power of that calm, irritating smile.

Although Elizabeth has done her best to persuade us, I, for one, do not feel at all sure that it was by her own desire that she went to live in a German garden. It is much more likely that it was the iron will of the Man of Wrath which condemned her to it after many ineffectual struggles, although she had sense enough when she found herself in exile to pretend that she liked it. How else should the commiseration of the neighbouring Patronising Potentate—a woman potentate, of course—have roused her to such anger, if some secret sting had not lain in the words—

“Ah, these husbands ! They shut up their wives because it suits them, and don't care what their sufferings are.”

It was the painful unacknowledged truth of the

remark which stung the resentful Elizabeth. And this explains the whole book.

Here is a woman, young and lovely, though somewhat lacking in perfection of nasal organ, condemned by her Bluebeard of a husband to live in a remote Schloss sorely against her will. The unfortunate lady immediately becomes a cynic, and professes contempt of worldly enjoyments. But revenge is sweet, and in her case necessary to her well-being, so she sits down to write a book which will proclaim her wrongs abroad. In this book she wreaks her vengeance on society, on her friends both present and absent, on her insentient furniture, on her servants (except the one whom she likes nearly as much as her sundial), on her governess, and even on her husband. She employs as her vehicle the form of the New Fiction as more likely to attract attention than the old, for if she had put her experiences into an ordinary novel, the circulation might have been limited to a paltry five hundred or so. But Elizabeth knew better than to do this, and the result is exactly as she anticipated, for everybody has a bowing acquaintance with her, and everybody is devoted to her. She has a real live charm such as is seldom found in the mere heroine of fiction, and I will gladly read every word which it may enter her capricious head to write, no matter on what subject she may choose to discourse us.

A totally different book is Mr. Alfred Austin's *Garden that I Love*, for while Elizabeth gives us, or pretends to give us, all her inmost thoughts, Mr. Austin bestows upon us as many treasures of

actual conversation as he can conveniently gather together. Our Laureate, as we who read our *Times* know well, is nothing if not articulate. He gives us poems to fit our many imperial moods, and we are secure of the enjoyment at first hand of the inspiring afflatus, because we are assured that we receive them just as they come to him. I suppose, therefore, that the mere man does not venture to correct, to add to, or to take from the heaven-sent beauties bestowed on the poet's pen.

In the *Garden that I Love* there is a considerable amount of Mr. Austin's verse. It is difficult to know how much, for both he and Shakespeare are alike without quotation marks. This is a great pity. The original verse might have stood unsupported, but surely Shakespeare and other similar writers should have been propped by quotation marks. How else can we distinguish between them and him? The situation even disarms criticism, if any criticism were possible, for how could the mere ordinary person venture to take exception to a passage which might turn out to be Milton's? It is obvious that the only thing to be done by the wary reader is to ignore the poetical portions of the book, and to enjoy that part which describes the garden and its inhabitants; even so there is much still left us.

Four persons inhabit the *Garden that I Love*—the writer, who is also the gardener, his sister Veronica, and his friends the poet and Lamia. At least we are artfully persuaded that there are four persons; in reality there are only two—Veronica, and the gardener-poet rolled with Lamia into one.

When these three speak seriously—and there is a good deal of serious speaking in the book—you would not know, if you shut your eyes, which of them is addressing you. Lamia, to be sure, has her frivolous moments, when for a brief space she makes a possible third; but when she is rhetorical she is one with the gardener and the poet. Veronica, on the other hand, has a separate identity; she is a simple being, and if she has views she keeps them carefully to herself. There is something very lovable about Veronica. She listens patiently for hours to all that the others have to say, and then she goes away and makes tea for them. She knows how exhausted they must be. They get rid of so many treasures of thought that they must necessarily be left swept and empty; the need of sustenance is plainly indicated, and Veronica supplies it.

Perhaps, however, the exhaustion is less than it might have been if certain circumstances had not come to their aid; and herein is manifest the wisdom of the Pooh-Bah arrangement. The chronicler can give us treasures of verse as from the mouth of the poet, paragraphs of floricultural details through the lips of the gardener, and gems of general utility from the irresponsible Lamia. The talents of the three if displayed in one person would invite incredulity. We should think it impossible that one small head could carry all the aphorisms and gnomic sayings which the three are anxious to distribute. We might begin to fear cerebral congestion. So to spare ourselves distress and anxiety we allow the writer to persuade us

that there are indeed three heads under the three hats, and thus we breathe again.

The poet sometimes gives vent to an untenable theory, but the gardener and Lamia, of course, cannot be expected to set him right, and dear little Veronica adores him far too much to do so. He is bold enough to justify in the name of restraint the bald and simple verse which is held by some of our later poets to be one with the true stuff. I cannot quite go with him here. Restraint is, no doubt, an admirable quality, but one ceases to admire it when it is inevitable. It is difficult to esteem the restraint of a gagged man who refrains from using bad language. The restraint and nothing more of which we see so much is a poor thing as a quality of verse, and it is difficult to perceive how *l'âme agitée* of a great poet in its moment of wildest frenzy could be "controlled by the serenity of the mind." Rigorous self-criticism is an essential, but I think that it would follow, not accompany, the frenzy. A poet must feel much in order to make his readers feel a little; he must weep many tears to ensure that they shall weep a few. When a poet places us in a situation where tears are obviously indicated, I fancy we are justified in blaming him if they do not come. If we accuse him not of restraint, but, like the gagged man, of want of power, I think we could make good our opinion. I do not for a moment mean to disparage the poet's admiration of restraint as a beautiful and a necessary quality in verse, but merely to contend that most of the restraint that would call itself by that

name is of the sort which cannot help itself, and this must be regarded as a defect and not as a beauty.

But if the poet sometimes rouses in me the spirit of contradiction, the gardener takes a mean revenge by trying to mystify his readers just as they think that they are getting on nicely. His garden fills one with envy, not only because there seem to be no failures in it, but also on account of its aspect, which varies apparently to suit the flora of different climes. Its orientation is certainly a little difficult to understand, but of course I am quite prepared to ascribe the difficulty to my own stupidity, and to believe that occasionally it slopes from north-east to south-west, and again that it looks south-east, simply because the gardener tells me so. But even this readjustment of Nature's aspects will not quite account for all the wonders that are in that garden. On the 30th of May the gardener's wood is covered with primroses, and this is not mentioned as an out-of-the-way state of things, but is given as a mere matter of fact. I, who have not his gift of extending the seasons to keep my garden in beauty, have indeed seen primroses on the 30th of May, but I have never had the luck of beholding a wood in the south of England "diapered with them" on that date. I can only believe and sigh for my own more limited opportunities. On the same date the gardener describes his tulips as having closed their petals for the night. Though it is a little late for Dutch tulips, he might persuade us to recognise an equal latitude for them as for the primroses but that he has informed us in a previous chapter that

he takes up these bulbs during the third week of May and lays them in by the heels. Of course, one is then justified in jumping to the conclusion that these flowers which have closed their petals for the night are the late English tulips, until one is reminded that in a previous chapter he has told us that he has never made proper use of these. This is one of those mysteries which hurt the understanding. Has he made *any* use of them, and are they the flowers that have just closed their petals for the night, or are his Dutch tulips so kind as to give him a further season of their beauty after they are laid in by the heels? These perplexities in a book which should help me in my gardening ought not so to be. They are too cruel to the merely average floriculturist. They make me feel how small are my powers in comparison with the powers of the gardener in this book. *I* cannot find large expanses of bluebells on my domain towards the latter end of June; *my* woods are not diapered with primroses on the 30th of May; I cannot grow woodruff from cuttings. I cannot get half the good results that this gardener gets from his garden, and the consciousness not only of my inferior powers, but also of Nature's unkindness in giving less lavishly to me than to others, induces feelings of depression akin to despair. The gardener-poet tells us that if he were asked which of his works he likes best he would answer "My garden." I have never seen his garden, so it is obviously impossible for me to re-echo this sentiment. But it must be a delightful garden to wander in and to admire, even at the risk of unworthy feelings of envy and the like. Loving

care has been lavished upon it without stint, and Nature has met the workers more than half-way, and has given them of her best. But it is something more than a beautiful garden. It is a beautiful background in a beautiful picture—a background for inspiring thoughts and brilliant conversation which demand an outlet there before appearing on the printed page to delight a wider though hardly a more appreciative audience.

Although Jim is an adorer of Elizabeth, his special detestation in literature is the garden book, and in this he is supported, as in many other things, by Magdalen Clifford. If I have neglected before to mention Magdalen, it is not because I do not love her very dearly, though for years it would never have occurred to me that she could be loved of our family; for she is that supplanter who stepped into Jim's heritage. When she came to the property she was a toddling child governed by her mother, who established a successful feud between herself and us. When we returned to our village there was no thought of any intercourse between ourselves and our cousins at the Manor. Magdalen's mother had made that impossible. But four years later, on a day when joy bells rang for Magdalen's coming of age, and the tenantry were to be feasted and the county to be entertained—on that day, in the fresh spring morning, a slim girl's figure swung through our garden gate, and stepped up the straight path, and demanded to see Jim and me.

"I am of age to-day," she said. "I am eighteen, and I may do as I like. I want you to let me know





A GIRL CAME UP THE STRAIGHT PATH



you ; I want to be friends. I am of age, and my own mistress, and I have been longing for it just that I might come to you. You won't send me away ?”

There was a suspicious break in the fresh young voice, and I kissed her, and I am sure that Jim would have liked to kiss her too. The feud was at an end from that moment, and even the intolerable mother, when we went home that morning with Magdalen, tried to pretend that it had never existed. The years have passed since then, and Magdalen is older by more than a thousand days, but is no less winning than she was on that morn of reconciliation. Hardly a day passes that she does not come to us, or we to her, and I have known her secret long ago, though she has never told it. But Jim, being a man, is stupid at seeing, or, if he sees, he keeps his counsel well. I do not know that I have much hope in the matter. Magdalen is proud, but Jim's pride is to hers like a mountain to a road grit ; and even if he cared, which I doubt, he would not let her know. There would be too much involved in it for him.

*June 29.* We are keeping the young cineraria plants in a cold frame on the north side of a hedge, and a veil of tiffany is laid near to shade them when the sun is high in the heavens. Cinerarias will not do their best if they have much warmth at any stage of their growth except the last. It cost me several packets of seed and three seasons' experience before I could impress this fact upon Sterculus, but he talks now as if I were a babe and he my instructor in cineraria growing.

"It ain't no good-on to talk about moving these here into the greenhouse," he will say about September, *a propos* of no remark of mine; "for not a step will they go for the next two months if *I* can help it."

This is the good Sterculus's way of showing me that he has learnt his lesson. I ought to point out to him that he is mistaken in assuming that I want to coddle the cinerarias. I ought to put a stop to his domineering tone of voice; I ought, in fact, to "keep him in his place," as Mrs. Clifford is fond of telling me. But I am still glad of him, and I know he is glad of me, in spite of his peculiar way of showing it. So I accept his scorn, being meek as a mouse the while, and look as though I had learnt a valuable lesson from him, while he goes away grunting that he isn't going to ruin his plants, not for nobody. I wonder if I shall always be glad of Sterculus, or if I may not perchance some day contemplate with satisfaction the idea of his departure, loving tender of my garden though he is.

## JULY

*July* 4. **E**XPERIENCE of a bitter sort is teaching me ever the necessity of staking plants. In principle it is, of course, an atrocious thing that should never be permitted in borders, but it is essentially necessary in spite of principle. Some things, such as oriental poppies, cry aloud even in infancy for stakes ; but pyrethrums, erigerons, delphiniums, dahlias, and other robust plants stand up so bravely before their blossoms form that it is hard to believe that they will require support later. The mischief is done when storms come just as the stems are heavy with blooms, as they did this year. They can be staked in their early days in such a way as to show but little sign of their props at the blooming period. The best time to do it is when they have practically attained their full height, but show no flower buds, and the best kind of stake is the roughly tooled one of deal or any harder wood, painted by the gardener the colour known as Aspinall's fig-green.

This is about the time to thin the buds of carnations. A general florist's rule is to leave the first, third, and fourth, but the amateur will do well to act in the matter by the light of nature, only pro-

viding that each blossom shall have sufficient stem to itself to allow of its being comfortably picked when the flowering time comes. The Margaret carnations which have survived the winter are as forward as the ordinary border kinds, and require more severe thinning than they. With a good stock of border plants it is not worth while to keep the Margarets through the winter, as the season is not thereby prolonged. But all must sow seed of these carnations under glass in February and March, to ensure flowers for cutting in the autumn. Last year I picked my last bunch—of but half a dozen blooms, I confess—on Christmas Day, but the weather would rarely in any season permit this after November, if so late. I have just seen in a friend's garden a dozen enormous clumps, over a yard in diameter, of a certain border carnation which he has had for years. The flower is something the colour of the rose Mrs. John Laing, but deeper in tone, and I have begged some layers from the lucky possessor. A carnation that will increase and prosper in this manner, instead of dwindling away in a decline after the first year or two, is a valuable addition to a garden.

This is a good time to look over the borders and judge what things should be removed in the autumn, whether through over-abundant growth or by their present juxtaposition with plants whose colours do not harmonise with theirs. The crimson pyrethrums, for instance, though pretty enough in themselves, rarely blend well with other flowers. It is best to keep them in one part of the border, and closely among them may be planted bulbs of

the Madonna lily, and of some later kinds also, to continue the season of bloom in that part of the bed.

Roses are a feature of the garden now. I am not specially successful with them, but they are doing well this year. To-day I cut seventy blooms for the house, and left over three hundred equally good ones on the bushes. The only very dark one that never fails is Eugen Fürst. It is a beautiful velvety claret colour, remarkably free-blooming, and easily managed. It is not so perfect a flower as Jean Liabaud at its best, which I consider the finest of all the dark roses; but I do not get one good bloom in a dozen of Jean Liabaud, while every one comes right of Eugen Fürst. Of true rose-coloured ones Countess of Oxford is as useful as any, its early blossoms especially being of a wonderful glowing tint. In bright crimsons A. K. Williams is unsurpassed to my mind, Ulrich Brunner and Marie Baumann being also excellent. Among pinks I like best Madame Gabrielle Luizet, Mrs. John Laing, and Captain Christy for good all-round serviceable qualities, and Margaret Dickson, Violette Bouyer, and Clio are a good white trio. All these are easy to rear and to do well. I have made several disastrous experiments in rose-growing, and am gradually getting rid of such as will not repay ordinary attention. I had a bed, for instance, of Salamander, and another of Ella Gordon, both greatly lauded by the growers, and admirable flowers at their best, but as they never let me see their best I ceased to think them worth giving up my beds to, and they are now trying to hold

their own in an ignoble place under some standards, and failing sadly still. Spenser, also, in which I indulged freely without any experience to guide me, turned out to be scentless, and though in most years an admirable doer, it is consequently devoid of charm for me. It is a sport from Baroness Rothschild, or from her progeny Her Majesty, and inherits this bad quality from her.



EATS ALL THE BLOOMS HE CAN REACH

*July 15.* Crimson Rambler over a bower is looking exquisite. It ought to be grown with The Garland, if any combination is desired with it. The two bloom together, and the white and crimson look well intermixed. An old-fashioned evergreen rose, Flora, on a north wall is good in many useful respects. It makes rampant wood, and one can cut great boughs of it for the house. Its shell-tinted little blossoms are beautiful of their kind, though they would not satisfy those persons



who must have all their flowers of the largest size. A hedge of white Ayrshires and pink hedge-roses has been spoilt by the new pony, who puts his head over and eats all the blooms he can reach, with not a few thorns as well.



EVENING PRIMROSES IN THE WILD GARDEN

The yellow alströmarias are in full glory. There is a round bed of them, edged with *funkia grandiflora*, whose beautiful fringe leads the long stems of the alströmarias gently into the ground. Many persons refrain from growing alströmarias because they do not consider them hardy, but they are hardy enough if planted nine inches below the surface, and un-

like many bulbous things, they do not object to such a deep burial. They are rampant growers, and it is best not to combine them with other flowers, as they soon smother all their neighbours. Oriental poppies may be cut down to the ground as soon as they have ceased flowering. Some of mine which were so treated towards the end of June are now throwing up good tufts of foliage which will prevent their being an eyesore much longer.

Very few persons care properly for the various evening primroses which add such a charm to the garden in July. The too persistent and troublesome *œnothera biennis* and its allies should be kept in the wild garden, but such varieties as *Æ. Youngii*, *Æ. speciosa*, and *Æ. taraxacifolia* are some of the best perennials I know, full of a refined beauty and flowering over a fairly long season. They are all easy to grow, and it is worth while in the case of the last, which has what I should consider an undeserved reputation for tenderness, to throw over the clumps in winter a handful of ashes or of fern. This dandelion-leaved evening primrose makes very large spreading plants in late summer, its prostrate shoots sometimes reaching a yard or more from its root; and it is well to plant with it some earlier bulbous flower which will bloom before the *œnothera*'s season begins in July. The Spanish iris makes an admirable companion for it.

This is St. Swithun's Day, and the annual village feast is being celebrated. Every Giles takes his Jane, and the enjoyment is fast and furious. I used to go to it sometimes when I was younger, but this led more than once to complications of

an awkward sort. It is better not to see one's rustic friends when they are in a state which could only euphemistically be called rollicking. And



REVELLERS

besides, they hurt one's feelings sometimes when beer is inside them.

"We likes 'ee; we be allus glad to see 'ee—but we can do wi'out 'ee," said one of my best friends on such an occasion as this.

"I've knowed 'ee since I used to kiss 'ee when

'ee was the height of a sha-a-ft," said an ancient carter in liquor on another feast day to me. So perhaps it is better to stay away both for their credit and for my own. The last time I was there



"THE HEIGHT OF A SHA-A-FT"

we went a little party of four, and we took refuge from rollickers at the cocoanut shy. The cocoanut man supplied us with the value of a few pence in wooden balls with the utmost alacrity; but very soon his delight turned to gloom, and presently he offered us sixpence to desist from our throwing, so

even he could "do wi'out us." I shall not go to our feast again, for although I like to see the rustic enjoy himself, I do not care to meet him in his cups. The sight is not a pretty one.

And yet it is wonderful when one comes to consider the vast improvement that a few years have worked in this matter. The agricultural labourer may not yet be a sober man, but he is infinitely more sober than he used to be when I was a girl, and the best sign of all is in the fact that public opinion is dead against him when he is given to indulgence in too much liquor. Formerly the thing was so much a matter of course that there appeared to be no difference, or at any rate very little, between the uniformly steady man and the man who was given to an occasional "breaking out," in the estimation of his neighbours of his own rank. But education and a general tendency to level up have done wonders in raising the standard of public opinion, and the man who only indulges in an occasional debauch is looked upon almost as coldly as the hopeless sot who spends every night and half his earnings at the public-house.

The rustic is a curious and amusing study when he first begins to feel the craving for self-improvement, especially if the time for such craving has been delayed until his youth is past. The process is somewhat uncomfortable while it is yet a process, for it seems necessarily to involve the giving up of old ways and modes of thought simply because they are old—of throwing off recognised customs merely because they have existed too long. The man of advanced views in a country village has no means

of testing these views and proving their value ; they can never develop into experience. He has a yearning for another sphere of action in which his associates will be those who think as he thinks, but he is probably married, and the burdens of the father and the householder restrict his liberty, so he tries to compass for his children that enlargement which he has no means of actually securing for himself.

One of my friends is a man of this description. He prides himself on his modernity, and he despises his wife a little because she cannot understand him. Maria has been brought up in conventional mode, and any departure from it strikes her merely as eccentric—"comical," as it is called in village circles. So the two are living at opposite poles, but they meet and shake hands whenever the question of the children arises.

"I don't know what to do wi' the childern," sighs poor Maria, with latent pride and yet a little anticipatory fear ; "they be gettin' so clever."

"They be !" responds her husband proudly.

"When they comes home from school they talks about oblongs an' sperricals, an' I don't know what they be drivin' at, Dan'el."

"Danny-ul," corrects the husband, who goes in for correctness of speech so far as he recognises it.

"Danny-ul," assents Maria.

"Ah !" says Daniel, with a reproachful shake of the head at his wife's hopeless ignorance, "mine be a clever fam'ly, Merire, an' no mistake ; an' when folks asks where they gets it from, I says, 'Not from their moother.' That's what I says, 'Not from their moother.'"

"Maybe," assents Maria wearily.

Maria thinks that it is the duty of a woman to listen to her husband's words of wisdom, to fetch and to carry for him, to bear him children and to be their slave, to keep his house clean, and to earn



"NOT FROM THEIR MOOTHER"

a little money in the intervals by field-work or charing. Her politics, unlike her husband's, are extremely narrow. The only government from which she has ever received any tangible benefit is an ecclesiastical one, and her hopes and expectations centre on the prime ministry of the parson. If a

pig dies he is good for several shillings towards its successor ; his long-tailed coats cut up into two for the boys, with a piece to spare for patches ; his store of beef-tea and little liver pills and flannel is practically inexhaustible. Of course, there are many things which he might give her, yet does not give ; she by no means approves entirely even of him. But on the other hand there is, with his exception, no person in the world from whom she can count on extracting anything whatever ; and her politics are confined to the maintenance of friendly relations with the sole government which comes within the limit of her experience.

Her religion is also narrow. She clings with fervour to the book of Genesis and to a few other plain and simple stories in subsequent portions of the Bible which seem to her coherent and worthy of attention. Sometimes this is a grief to her husband, who objects to her readings as behind the feeling of the age.

"Don't tell the child the world *was* made in six days, an' don't tell en it *wasn't*," he urges. "Leave en to puzzle it out fer hisself—himself—an' come to the conclusion whe'r it *sounds* a likely story."

For Daniel calls himself "an up-to-date sort o' feller," and objects to bigotry from any point of view whatever. "Us findy-seekle chaps goes fer toleration," he says, and his politics and his religion are alike devoid of prejudice, except at election times, when his innate Liberalism becomes somewhat rabid in its quality.

He is very firm on the subject of education. His children dare not miss an attendance at school, for



he maintains that from education come all the good things of life. The arts especially impress him with their importance. He never grudges the money to buy a violin for Jessie or a cornet for Sidney ; but it is Maria who has to scrape and to save and to go shabby to pay the bill, for a wage of fifteen shillings a week leaves little margin for luxuries.

"Did Cholge go out an' take a picter to-day as I told en?" he asks, after supper.

"Yes, Dan'el."

"Danny-ul."

"Yes, Danny-ul, he did."

"What picter did he take?"

"Him an' Tom Dunch went up to the vicarage an' set down afore the house an' took its picter quite comferable. The Vicar come out an' looked at 'em."

"Ah! the Vicar'll see as he ain't the on'y one as can take sketches of other folks' houses," says Daniel, with satisfaction. "Our eddication authorities is gettin' the right way to work at last. In twenty years' time there'll be as many artisses in cottages as there is in mansions. Let me see the picter."

The picture has been carefully put away in the drawer of the dresser, wrapped in a sheet of *Reynolds'*. Daniel holds it between his finger and thumb, and puts his head first on one side and then on the other, to focus it rightly.

"There's talent in it," he remarks admiringly, when he has finished his scrutiny; "there's talent in it. I don't say 'tis *like* a house, an' I don't say 'tis the *size* of a house. What I says is, there's talent in it. I see—saw—a sketch of Mr. Bunce's

the other day, an' 'twas done—did—done pretty much in this style; the cows was on'y about an inch long an' the barns wasn't a quarter o' their



“THIS HERE SKETCH IS UP TO DATE”

natural length. You see you couldn't get 'em all in if you was to make 'em life-size. You couldn't get a cow in, let alone a barn.”

It has struck Maria that the windows in Cholge's

cottage are ludicrously inadequate for the admission of light and air, and the dog lying on the doorstep is more the size of a blackbeetle than of a dog, for Cholge's hand has been guided by the Vicar, and proportion and perspective have been to some extent recognised in consequence. The many chromos on the kitchen wall are accepted as mere pictures, not being comparable with anything existing in nature. But everyone knows old Toby, and loud guffaws would be likely to follow the exhibition of a portrait which makes him look no larger than a wasp on the window-pane.

"When there's anything in a picter as can't be understood, Merire, or anything as looks unnateral, depend upon it 'tis summat—somethink—artistic. This here sketch shows talent, and this here sketch is up to date. I shall make a frame fer it the next wet day we gets, an' Cholge shall be an artis'."

Daniel is a keen observer of the phenomena of nature, and a student of White's *History of Selborne*, which he borrows from the village library. He cordially agrees with most of the theories contained in this book, not excepting that one which represents the swallow as hibernating in the mud at the bottom of ponds. He holds that he could have told the author many details which are missing from the *History*, as well as much that he reads therein, and could in this latter case have spared him the trouble of puzzling them out for himself. He has lately taken to astronomy, and has learnt the names and positions of a few of the principal constellations, and at times of eclipses and of the reappearance of comets he has much to say.

Meteors also greatly interest him, and those which were expected some time since, and never arrived, roused his scorn of the wise men who had foretold them. He spent several nights in searching for them, and even now he is not tired of relating his curious experiences to a sympathetic listener.

"I scanned the horrazon," he says, "from Uriah to Ursula Major" (did he mean from Orion to Ursa Major?), "an' I saw no me-oters whatever. But some queer things happened in the sky—things as comical as ever I did see. Ursula was behavin' quite proper" (very consoling, this), "an' the Pole Star, he never budged an inch; but most o' the big stars wandered about a good bit, some on 'em as many as twenty or thirty yards from their rightful plazes. There wasn't no me-oters, not to *call* me-oters, but what *I* says is I expects that's how they went off."

I cannot quite follow my friend Daniel's line of reasoning here, but his interest in astronomy is as indisputable as his strict sobriety.

*July 24.* Before the end of this month two of the most important of outdoor operations demand attention—the budding of roses and the layering of carnations.

Few things are more heartbreaking than to see unclouded skies succeed each other, day in, day out, all through the time when rosebuds are crying aloud to be united to the brier stock. I have never been very successful in budding after giving them water from the watering-pot, though I have carried on the operation for a week or more before budding. The natural rain from heaven is far more

satisfactory than the gardener's feeble attempts to supply moisture. This year Jupiter Pluvius has been good to us, and the sap is rising fairly quickly after a considerable period of dry weather. Budding is not easily learned from books; a half-hour's lesson from a practical gardener will teach it far more easily and correctly. But it is well to remind oneself at times of little details which may possibly be forgotten.

All through the spring an eye is kept on the stocks, and only those branches are allowed to grow which are the required height from the base of the tree. We generally keep two shoots on each stock, and enter buds on both, in case one should fail; if both take, the upper one is removed by cutting away the head. It is a great mistake to shorten back the spray at the time of budding, for this checks the flow of sap, and the buds may fail for want of nourishment.

When the stock has been budded the gardener's care does not yet come to an end. In favourable circumstances the bud unites in five or six weeks' time, and the heads must be looked over and the ties loosened a little if they require it; that is to say, if the bud is swelling and the ligature is tight. Sometimes the bud remains dormant until the following spring, so that the tie need not be unbound; but often it begins to grow in the late summer, and requires stopping as soon as it is a few inches high. This causes the sap to concentrate in the rings, and thus to prepare the way for the pushing of side-shoots next spring, and the consequent formation of a good head. About

October we cut in the head of wild brier to a moderate extent, not entirely removing it; and even in March, when the tree is finally trimmed, one bud of the wild branch is left above the inserted bud. This is called the sap bud, and it draws the sap upward and helps the scion to push into a head. If this wild bud were not left the sap might not easily flow into the inserted scion, and the brier would throw up side-shoots all down the stem instead of concentrating its powers on the new bud.

With the pruning of the spray in March comes the cutting in of the brier top, which was probably a few inches taller than the branch on which the bud was entered. This top is cut down in a slightly slanting direction so closely to the base of the budded shoot that hardly more than the eighth of an inch shall remain above it. The wound is covered with clay paint to prevent the loss of sap.

Presently the sap bud begins to grow vigorously, and when it has shown perhaps three pair of leaves it is stopped by nipping off the top. This will induce the inserted bud to take the lead, and it should now grow away merrily, the sap bud being reduced, if necessary, by degrees to smaller dimensions, and finally about midsummer cut away altogether. By this time the wild growth will be entirely superseded by the rose, which should be a good tree, carrying the best flowers it will ever bear, for from these maiden plants come the finest blooms which adorn the tables at the rose shows.

Carnations should be layered while yet the plants

are in full flower, or they will not root sufficiently to be transplanted in the early autumn. Consequently the end of July, or the early days of August, are the most suitable. The earth is scraped away round the plants to a depth of two inches, and the hole is filled up with good potting soil. Each shoot is stripped up to the top four



“IN MA PAWKET”

joints, and then with a sharp knife the cut is made half through a shoot, just below a joint, with a slant upward and through the joint. A layering peg is inserted into the compost above the tongue, and as the peg comes down into the ground it catches the tongue and thrusts it into the earth. A little more soil is placed over the tongue, the plants are carefully watered, and by early October they should be

well rooted and ready to transfer to their flowering quarters.

*July 27.* The curate has just called on his way home from his holiday. He has been for three weeks in Normandy, and, as he was walking, I naturally asked him where his luggage was.

"In ma pawket," he replied.

There was no sign of a bulge in any of his pockets except the betraying outline of a pipe over his heart. The dear old man is leaving here next month, and intends to die in the North Country, where he was born and, from his speech, evidently reared as well. He is parlous old—anything between seventy and eighty—and his faculties are not what they were. The Sunday before he went for his holiday there was to be a baptism at the evening service, and the clerk, to ensure his remembering it, wrote on the back of a National Anthem, which had been left unnoticed ever since the Accession, the warning words—

"Crisnen after 2 lessen."

Mr. Tyler jumped up from his knees in the middle of the General Confession, and announced firmly—

"We will now sing 'God save the King.'"

The choirman nearest him redirected his attention to his prayer, and after a breathless interval of anxiety all went well again. One Sunday last spring he unconsciously modified one of the petitions in the Litany in a rather startling manner, which, however, was quite unperceived by his rustic congregation.

"That it may please Thee to bless and preserve



to our use George Prince of Wales, the Princess of Wales, and all the Royal Family, so that in due time we may enjoy them."

These alterations in divine service are a little disturbing to the attentive worshipper, though we are now quite accustomed to his announcing the hymn as the "three hundred and forty-second morning of the month," and there is not a smile as we



CHOIR-BOYS

look for the canticle so numbered in our books. I heard a small choir-boy, however, whose patience presumably was exhausted, say to another one evening as we issued in the dark from the porch—

'What *I* says is, he's like a old 'orse as ought to be shot'; but luckily Mr. Tyler is deaf, and as the

child had no thought that he was overheard it seemed best to ignore the remark. Everyone likes the good old soul, and wishes him well. The God to whom he tries his best to lead us is a strictly anthropomorphic Being, and the heaven he promises us every Sunday would rival the Mohammedan paradise. We rarely get a sermon without a vivid description of "the dainties and delicacies of the Kingdom of Heaven," and he smacks his lips when he speaks of them. He has had so few nice things in his life, poor dear! There are other stereotyped features in his sermons which we look for every Sunday, such as "going up and down the rapids of life"; and when he traces the footsteps of biblical exemplars for our guidance, he does not follow them from the cradle to the grave, but from the "babsinette to the sepulchre."

## AUGUST

*Aug.* **L**AMMAS DAY rouses in me all the antagonism to our modern land tenure of which my disposition is capable. A feature which was once so prominent in village life and is now non-existent was the possession by the people of large tracts of land held in common. From Lammas or from Michaelmas to Lady Day these tracts practically belonged to the villager. We have in this parish various large portions of waste and marsh lands which at one time formed part of a great public property. Even so recently as the year 1550 a Survey of the parish recites the boundaries of extensive heaths and commons on which parishioners were entitled to pasture their cattle; but it is probable that these rights of "free communication" had in some degree lapsed before the lands were enclosed and appropriated by the lord of the manor in 1820. In Saxon days, however, they must have formed a considerable portion of the whole parish.

Though the point has never been clearly set at rest, it is justifiable to believe that at the periods of the early settlements of our country a large proportion of the land belonged to the people.

The freemen of the village community owned a lord, indeed, but he was hardly better than *primus inter pares*, and had his recognised duties side by side with his recognised rights. To understand the position it is necessary to bear in mind the sparseness of the population. The county of Middlesex, for instance, so lately as eight hundred years ago was estimated to contain only 2,289 souls. The patches of cultivated ground in a village in Saxon days would be infinitesimal in comparison with their surrounding expanses of folk land. A lord might slice off for himself any choice portions, and yet leave for the community more than they could use of the desolate areas of waste or forest in which they had their rights. In later times the permission of the King was necessary for this sort of appropriation, and I find in the twelfth century a writ of Henry I. which refers to this parish. The King had here a huntsman called Crook; it is to "Croco venatori" that he addresses his mandate, requiring him to permit the monks of Abingdon to break up certain waste land in the parish. The monks had a settlement here, and it would be beneficial to all sections of the community that they should bring under cultivation a part of the waste tract, which was practically valueless because there was a great deal too much of it. The people were few; their property was almost illimitable. The breaking up of more land would represent an increase of food and employment for the inhabitants. So Crocus Venator was told to put no hindrance in the way of the monks, who were doubtless inspired by benevolence in their agricultural intentions.

Our parish in those days, though of course co-terminus with several other parishes, had little communication with them. Beyond its practicable limits lay a lonely waste. In the centre was the *ham*, with the lord's wooden hall, the church, and rude hovels made of wattle and daub. Around this was the cultivated land and grass yards for rearing calves and other animals—the common farmstead, in fact. Then came the pastures in which the people had rights after the lord had made his hay. And outside all were the woods and marshes and uncultivated land, generally termed the waste. From this waste the public supplied themselves with firebote, hedgebote, and housebote, and also found what sustenance for their geese and cattle and other stock the more restricted pasture areas could not yield. But although sometimes portions of this waste were taken over and tilled, and came thus gradually under cultivation, this was not the only means by which waste land was reclaimed. Occasionally the portionless younger son of a lord would break away from his family and penetrate into the waste with a few followers, build dwellings, and cultivate the hitherto virgin soil, and thus a new lordship would be gradually formed, with powers over its adherents, and in time recognised suzerainty over all who dwelt within its boundaries.

At the time of the Norman Conquest most of the twenty thousand Saxon manors were taken over by new lords. In some counties, as over the border in Hampshire, the passion of the King and his court for hunting caused the afforesting

of large tracts of land which had been reclaimed and given over to the plough. The workers were driven from their fields, elbowed out of their lands, and compelled sometimes to find means of subsistence in unlawful ways. But apart from this local evil attendant on the change, the land question was but little altered. The King claimed seignorial sway over all the lands of England, but in his redistribution there was little outward change in the actual position of the lower classes as regards their common rights. This came gradually and imperceptibly. By degrees the waste, which was originally the people's waste, began to be designated as the lord's waste. The manorial system, which was defined and fixed under Norman lawyers, recognised with the King's suzerainty the landlord's all-embracing ownership. Since he owned the persons of his dependents, he regarded himself as owner also of their property. The legal theory assumed the landlord as deriving his property in the first instance by a grant from the Crown, he in his turn giving out of his consideration certain privileges to his tenants and serfs. The earlier communal ownership of land was ignored by those who were strong enough to take all that they coveted; and so by degrees the people's waste became the lord's waste, and the heritage of the poor was grabbed by the rich and powerful. And thus there grew up a belief that the common lands were rightly diverted from their proper use when the lord assumed his ownership of them and determined to enclose and cultivate them; and those commoners who pro-



REMNANTS OF FOLK LAND





tested against his encroachments found themselves confronted in the year 1235 with a special Act drawn up for their discomfiture and disinheriting. This Act, the famous Statute of Merton, was in effect the first of nearly seventeen hundred Enclosure Acts, which up to the year 1800 robbed the poor man of his property and gave it to the rich man. In 1801 the provisions of these many Bills were consolidated in Sir John Sinclair's Enclosure Act, under whose ample provisions the work of spoliation went on apace, and the next generation saw its completion. The people woke up to find themselves stript of their property. They had ceased to be owners of land; the only portion which had ever been theirs had been stolen from them while they slept.

We can still trace in our parish the last remnants of folk land, which were enclosed nearly a century ago. Up to that time on Lammas Day the heath began to be noisy with the lowing of cows and the quacking of geese, and gay with children whose right it was to play there. There are not many ancient institutions which I would gladly welcome back amongst us, but I should be happy indeed if I could believe that the commons and heaths and wastes of our rural parishes would ever belong again to their rightful owners.

*Aug. 10.* Beds of annuals are now good; some, such as petunias, at their best. These are rather handsome in mixed colours with a wide edging of white pansies, but it is a wonderful thing that people do not oftener grow the old-fashioned pink variety, which is almost a true pink, with but a little of the

aniline tint that is commonly seen. *Cosmos* is one of the newer and disappointing annuals. If the flower was as good as the foliage it would be excellent ; but the habit is tall and straggling, the flowers are sparse, and frequently bad in colour, and the plant is unworthy of consideration in comparison with many older things. An annual which is not yet sufficiently known is *nemesia*—the *strumosa Suttoni* variety, which has hardly a bad tint in the whole of its range. It lasts well, too, and where a few varieties of annuals only can be grown, this is indispensable. So is the gorgeous *phacelia campanularia*, which is the best and brightest of all. Its colour is the true gentian blue ; it is the earliest to bloom of all the best annuals, and should consequently be sown late if wanted for August. I should like to grow this with a border of some pale mauve flower, such as the palest *ageratum*, and near at hand I should have nothing but a bed of white *phlox Drummondii*, and one of pansies of the faintest maize colour. Blue to be seen at its best should be associated with other cool colours. *Petunias*, for instance, would destroy half its charm if they came too near. *Ageratum*, on the contrary, if sufficiently delicate in tone, would help the *phacelia* on to the white *phlox*, which again might lead the way to warmer tints.

Another excellent blue flower which I have mentioned before is the *commelina celestis*, rarely seen in gardens. I suppose this is because it is, strictly speaking, a tender perennial, and as such has been discredited by growers of hardy flowers ; but if treated as an annual it is all that can be

desired. We generally sow the seed under glass, and transfer the seedlings later to small pots. In autumn, if required, the tubers may be lifted and stored in dry sand under the greenhouse stage, and may be planted out rather closely together in the following spring; but I have always found the best results from giving it annual treatment. The blue of the commelina is quite as good as that of the phacelia, and it lasts longer in bloom.

Beds of mixed eschscholtzias are always striking and fairly continuous. Care must be taken, however, not to include the pretty rose cardinal variety in a mixed bed, as it would destroy the harmony; and care must be taken again to keep them away from all flowers of a pink or crimson shade.

Nothing is more pleasing than good beds of stocks; their sweetness makes them the most valuable of the tender annuals. Marigolds of various kinds are useful, but these differ in value, such a one, for instance, as the newer French variety, Legion of Honour, being positively harmful to the eye in its outrageous mingling of crimson and orange. Brown is the only possible combination with the natural deep yellow of marigolds, and the more brown there is the greater will be the success of the bed. But the humble little tagetes is perhaps the most useful still of all the self oranges, and makes a handsome show when more flaunting things have yielded to age and infirmity.

There is something in annual asters to please every taste except one, and that one the only taste which should be considered. They should

be abolished from the gardens of every lover of the beautiful. We could not in these days endure chrysanthemums of such stiff, unpleasing form and crude range of colouring; why not carry on the healthy feeling of repulsion to the unsatisfactory aster, and get rid of it entirely until growers can improve it out of its present shape and tints? The only tolerable ones are the single varieties. I cannot think why asters should be considered a necessity of the garden; from the castle to the cottage the summer show is spoilt by them, and when they are displayed in mixed beds they should set on edge the teeth of the gardener of discernment. But the years come and go, and still they retain their supremacy in the garden, and better things are neglected for them.

Few things are lovelier than masses of the half-hardy *dianthus chinensis* treated as an annual. The colours are good; the tufts are thoroughly floriferous, and the bloom lasts for months together. Yet one seldom sees them except as isolated plants. They are admirable if sown in February and bedded out under rose bushes, as they carry on the colour scheme of the roses, and keep the beds furnished.

Zinnias, if used at all, should be chosen with discretion, a general hotch-potch mixture being most displeasing. It is best to get separate packets of the yellows, oranges, and whites, and to mix them for one's self, omitting entirely all of a pink or magenta shade. Gardeners go wrong over these even more often than over petunias, godetias, and clarkias. Most of the shades of these two last are

quite impossible ; the deep crimsons, coral pinks, and white, which are the only admissible ones, are usually lost in a maze of lilac, magenta, and kindred tints, which completely cheapen the value of the good colours amongst them. The fact that on their introduction the flowers were mainly weak and washy, and that growers consequently became habituated to bad shades in them, should not make us lose sight of the fact that there are good ones now to be had, and that the bad should not be tolerated on any plea whether of economy or oversight.

And to ensure good colours we must go to good dealers. For the seeds of perennials this is a matter of less moment than for the seeds of annuals. Many of the perennials have no variation from the type colour ; seed from a penny-pocket man may not come up, but if it comes up it will probably be as good as that from an expensive place. Of course there are many perennials to which this remark would not apply, but as a general rule it may stand good. But with annuals it is not so. Cheap annuals are often bad annuals. They are always bad annuals when they include bad colours in their range. That is the reason why they are cheap. In ordering flower seeds a very good plan is to proceed as follows :—

Divide your seeds into two lists ; in one list those, whether annuals or perennials, which are represented by only one shade, such as *phacelia campanularia*, *commelina celestis*, tagetes, and those named kinds which are sold separately, although their variety is not limited to one tint, such as

*eschscholtzia mandarin*, antirrhinum snow queen, and such-like things. Get these, if you can, from a penny man, if economy is an object. The second list should contain all mixed seeds, as well as those named ones which the penny man does not sell. Order these from the best dealers.

Sweet peas are among the most useful of flowers for cutting just now. We sow a row under a south wall in October or November, and from February to June more are drilled in for succession. Those sown in the autumn, however, often outlast the spring ones, and if the seed pods are kept from forming are useful well into the autumn. The June planting is rather flukey; in a warm October you may pick large quantities, but in many seasons all that one can hope to get from them are their lovely trails of green to add to bouquets of other flowers. But even if one has no more than this from them the trouble of sowing is well repaid.

It is a great pity that growers are trying to change the form of the sweet pea. The wings with rounded top, which are taking the place of the old cleft wings, may be pretty enough, and at any rate the change in this respect is no disadvantage. But the hooded shape which these wings are assuming through the efforts of the specialist growers is anything but an improvement. It can be seen at its very worst in the hideous object called Red Riding Hood, which was introduced five or six years ago; and if our new varieties are to follow the form of Red Riding Hood, I shall take care to preserve a strain of the good

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old-fashioned kinds, even if they are inferior in size to the new.

*Aug. 18.* I have cut for winter bouquets clouds of the delicate white *gypsophila paniculata*, *statice latifolia*, *eryngium Oliverianum*, and planum, and the blue spiked balls of *echinops ritro*. The *iris foetida* and the physalis are not quite ready, and must be cut in September. A good mixed bunch of these, arranged with trails of small ivy, looks very well in a dark corner of the drawing-room in winter, and economises other flowers. All these are dried by being hung upside down in an airy place for a few days, after which the dead leaves are stripped off to make the stems tidy, and the branches are stowed away, to be brought out again when live flowers are scarce.

The beauty of gardens at this season depends so much on half-hardy plants that—as I have so few of these—a certain bareness is apt to show itself about August. There is but little room in this garden for dahlias, cannas, gladioli, pelargoniums, and other tender stuff; besides which the care of many of these in winter would entirely prevent *Sterculus* from paying proper attention to the plants which bloom at that time, and would, in fact, occupy our small greenhouse to their exclusion. Some friends of mine with two or three excellent glass-houses never muster a bloom for their living-rooms at mid-winter, because the houses are given over entirely to bedding plants. This is utterly wrong in principle. There are many flowers with which to fill summer beds without depriving ourselves of the use of greenhouses for their proper

purpose—the providing of flowers at a season when they are not to be had out of doors. If one can do everything—hardy and tender plants and greenhouse plants proper—well and good. But if the greenhouse room is limited let me beg amateurs to throw away all the tender garden stuff which litters its shelves. The keeping of cuttings for summer bedding is a costly and ugly practice which, in such circumstances, should be put a stop to at once. Begonias for bedding can be preserved under the stages; dahlias will live through the winter in a warm cellar, cannas and gladioli may be hidden away in odd holes and corners. But pelargoniums and heliotropes, and a dozen other subjects which gardeners love to keep throughout the winter, should be got rid of without delay unless there is room for them and for the winter-blooming flowers too, which is seldom the case in the amateur's greenhouse. Better a little bareness in August, when, at least, the borders still supply large quantities of flowers for cutting, than a dearth of bloom in December, when it is more valuable than at any other time.

In looking forward to winter's needs the first bulbs which demand potting are the freesias. If these have been properly attended to since their last blooming, the old bulbs will be as good as any new ones could be. We plant the first during the last week of July, and those for a succession at this time; about a dozen will go into a six-inch pot, and it is better not to plunge them, as is generally advisable with bulbs, for the leaf growth is so tender that it will hardly bear freeing from the



material under which it may have been placed. They can be put in a cold frame in a shady aspect, or under the greenhouse stage, and should be given no more water than is absolutely necessary to keep them from drying up. If the soil has had a moderate amount of moisture in it when they were planted they will need little additional attention in this respect. It is through mistaken kindness in the matter of watering that most of the many failures to grow freesias occur; too much water at a later stage of growth will make the leaves turn yellow and prevent their flowering well. The less freesias are forced also, the better they will be; a cool temperature with protection from frost is all that is required to ensure good results.

There is nothing more difficult among common flowers to grow well than the Persian cyclamen, and I am able to say so with decision, for I have never yet succeeded in having them to my liking. Part of the reason is that I am away in the late summer, when they require special attention, and another part is that I do not really understand them. Of course I can get pots of healthy leaves and a sprinkling of flowers, but that is what I do not care for. I want two hundred blossoms to a pot, and I can't get them. And yet my plants appear to be managed under suitable conditions, so that it is difficult to understand why my simple wants cannot be gratified. We re-pot them in August, giving them a suitable compost with a dash of soot in it. The plants are placed in cold frames, and are carefully protected from chills, while they

are given all the air that is compatible with perfect safety. They are dewed over with a fine rose every day, and watered as often as they require attention, being plunged in basins of water at a later stage when the pots are full of roots. They are kept free from insect pests, and their winter temperature is as moderate as it ought to be, and the result is complete failure because it is not the best that can be had. As I watch *Sterculus* potting them up and talking as if he expected a fine show a few months later, I feel a very hypocrite as well as a monster of incapacity, for I know that the results will be meagre and trivial compared with those obtained by my friend whose plants I described in April.

But though I know they will disappoint me, still I am very kind to them, as well as to the other winter things from which I expect much more comfort. All plants that are to bloom in the dark days require care in the bright weather of August ; if they are neglected now dearth will result later. The retaining of chrysanthemum buds is as important as any other work, but the culture of this flower is such a large subject that it would be of little use to attempt to give instructions for it in this book. There are several handbooks which tell everything that is necessary, and the best among them, so far as my experience goes, is that by Mr. W. Wells, of Redhill, the well-known raiser of these flowers. There are some plants which bloom best from terminal buds, and others which give better results from crown buds, and to distinguish between these does not come within the scope of the

ordinary garden book. But a few general remarks about bud-retaining may not be amiss.

During the month of August the gardener will see buds forming at the point of each shoot, and in the case of crown buds all the surrounding shoots must be got rid of if good blossoms are expected. But this rubbing away of superfluous growth must be done with care; to attempt it directly the bud appears would be a process which would weaken the growth of the flowers; so both bud and surrounding growth are allowed to make a certain amount of progress until the former seems to have a separate existence, when the unnecessary shoots are gradually removed—one to-day, one to-morrow, and so on, thus avoiding a check to the flower bud. We generally grow three stems to a plant, and three shoots to each stem; each shoot develops a flower, and thus we get about nine blossoms to a plant. Even with cuttings struck in March these come a very respectable size, quite large enough, at any rate, to satisfy the amateur who is not intent on showing, for we can depend on their measuring from five to nine inches in diameter, which is as large as is required for cutting.

The sweet peas must not be allowed to pod, or the bloom will come to a sudden stop presently; every withered flower is picked off before it can set seeds, and thus blossoming is continued over a long season. *Lilium candidum* may be transplanted if it needs a change, for this is the best month to do the work; lilies hate root disturbance when once they have thrown up their foliage in autumn.

Some gardeners are very successful with hardy

annuals sown about the end of this month and transplanted before the winter to beds prepared for them. Autumn-sown annuals such as these certainly blossom more strongly and profusely and over a longer season than those reserved for spring sowing, but, of course, the difficulty lies in tiding them safely through the frosts of December and January, which may destroy them utterly. I have never made any serious attempt at this system, though some of my best annuals in the mixed borders come from autumn-sown seed of their own distributing. I have also had plants of candytuft which have bloomed throughout a summer and survived the following winter, and have made such hard wood through old age that their stems resembled the rugged bark of a young maple sapling.

*Aug. 19.* I am very fond of dog stories, and always read with much interest those which appear from time to time in the *Spectator*. I have more than once sent dog stories of my own to the editor of that paper, but he has never had the discernment to print them. Jim was rude enough once to suggest that they were too good even for the *Spectator*, but they are true nevertheless. I have only had two really human dogs who were so absolutely of us that they did not even know that they were dogs, or, if possibly they knew, would not acknowledge the fact. One of these was a mongrel fox-terrier named Joe, and so well did he understand all our conversation that when we did not wish him to know our plans we were forced to speak in Spanish, for he was quite good

at elementary French. If we spoke English the matter was hopeless.



SMILING BY THE ROADSIDE

“Where are you driving to-day?”

“I am going to pay a call at Butterbridge.”

“Shall you take *le petit chien*?”

By saying “*le petit chien*” instead of “the dog”

Jim would imagine that he was using all the necessary wiles of dissimulation.

"No, they don't like dogs. I must leave him at home."

An hour or so would go by, and our efforts to find Joe would become exasperating; so in despair I would start to find *le petit chien* waiting for me a mile away smiling by the roadside. He always smiled when he had got the better of me, but I only once heard him laugh aloud. On that occasion I had taken him to the tennis-club ground, as I often had done before without being reproved by the secretary. But the next day was to witness the beginning of the annual tournament, and the secretary thought it his duty to deliver himself of a warning concerning Joe.

"I'm afraid you mustn't bring Joe to-morrow," he said—the dog listening hard the while; "there's a fine of half a guinea on tournament days."

Of course I promised that he should not appear, and presently when we came away I called him, and he followed me as far as the gate like the most obedient of dogs. But I saw him no more until the next afternoon, when, on reaching the ground, we were met at the gate by Joe, whose little neck was craned out looking for us. He had hidden all night in the pavilion, and the secretary had not had the heart in the morning to dislodge him.

He was, generally speaking, an admirably behaved little dog, but on one occasion he gave vent to a spirit of revenge quite human in its wickedness. He went with us to stay with an aunt, and one morning when we had promised him a walk, she,

for some good reason, thought it best that he should not accompany us, and shut him up with herself in the drawing-room. When his rage had apparently abated she let him out of the room, thinking that



A CAP IN SHREDS

all would now be right. Little did she know Joe. He went straight up to her bedroom, mounted a chair to reach the toilet table, and presently brought her best cap downstairs, laying it at her feet in shreds.

His end was sad. One unhappy day he followed

Jim when he was going for a few hours to Oxford, jumping into the train with him just as it was on the point of starting. He was lost in the High Street, evidently through following the wrong cab. He would be twenty-two years old if he were still alive, but I have never ceased to miss him, and none of my many other dogs have taken his place in my affections.

*Aug. 30.* There are days when one wakes up with the mind "oppressed," as it seems, "with the burden of an unintelligible world." Very often this comes from a kind of unconscious prescience of evil, such as a visit from the rate-collector or some other uncomfortable person. To-day, for instance, I have been haunted by such an unaccountable woe, and not until evening was it explained by a call from the Converted Camberwell Cadger. I came upon him unexpectedly as I was going out into the garden, so there was no escaping my fate. I could hardly say "Not at home" to a Camberwell Cadger who was staring me actually in the face. Words cannot describe how for twelve long months I have dreaded this meeting. The consciousness of guilt has weighed me down until at times life has not seemed worth living while I had so pitiful a secret locked up in my bosom. But now that I have broken the silence in part to my diary, I will go on and reveal the whole sad story, in the hope that with confession peace may once more come back to me.

It was just a year ago that I was bicycling back from a garden-party when, on our village green, I came upon a temperance van, from which the

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Camberwell Cadger was holding forth in impassioned Cocknese. A good many rustics were gathered round him, and I have certainly never heard a more moving orator than this dirty little man who shouted his gospel of virtue at a spell-



A MOVING ORATOR

bound audience. I can't deny that some of his arguments went home to me too; for instance, when he talked—with a leer in the tail of his eye—of those whose education and position should make them show a good example to their ignorant brothers and sisters; of those whose self-indulgent habits would not allow them to deny themselves, to

help weaker vessels to get to the surface—when he said these things with desperate intent to secure my help in his mission, I must say I felt rather guilty. He was terribly in earnest, and one of the worst of the village toppers was hovering round his rickety ladder, uncertain whether to sign or not to sign. Well it did not seem a great hardship to give up my daily small allowance of wine, so in the end I went up those steps and signed the pledge, the village toper following in my footsteps.

I went home with a slight feeling of shame mixed with a certain amount of satisfaction in my virtue. When I broke the news to Jim he gave way to unusual laughter and called me names. He said we had been wanting in village idiots since Aunty Green died, but that her place was filled at last with the real article. I watched him drinking his claret with much affected gusto, and thought it very hateful of him that he did not offer to give up his glass now that I had given up mine. The Cadger had called it “giving up the glass,” and it seemed to me that Jim was acting selfishly in sticking to his. The next day at dinner-time he told me that he had just seen Bill Reynolds (the converted toper who had signed the pledge with me) reeling home from the village inn.

Things went on like this for nearly a month. I could not eat my meals without the modest glass of claret to which I had been accustomed, and when they were finished I was uneasy. I used to think of the Eton boy who complained that his cold chicken “got in front and hurt.” Every day I watched Jim as he filled his glass, and every day I

came nearer to thinking that I was indeed qualified to fill the place of Aunty Green. Sometimes I even wept a little, but "all tears are not for sorrow." Then at last came the doctor, and I was restored to my vicious, comfortable habits by medical order.

I must confess that to-day, when I found that the Camberwell Cadger was on the doorstep, and remembered in one vivid moment the tale of back-sliding which he would have to hear, I murmured that he would like to see Mr. Clifford, and ushered him quickly into Jim's study with a long face, in which I knew his quick eye would read pleading—and then I fled. Jim understood, as he always understands; and ten minutes later I saw the Cadger depart with a jaunty step and a chinking of the pocket, and I knew that the cause at any rate was a gainer by my fall. "The gods sell all things at a price"; the price in this instance was my priceless self-respect, the want of which impels me to flee to the garden's deepest recesses at the very name of the Camberwell Cadger.

## SEPTEMBER

*Sept.* **T**HE first work of September is the propagating of roses from cuttings. Those bushes which the salesmen supply are usually worked on a foreign stock, which enables them to make a larger growth than own-root plants could do in a given time ; and the nuisance never abates of keeping an eye on the stock to prevent the rising of wild wood. But roses on their own roots, though they take a year or so longer than the others to make good plants, never afterwards give any trouble, and it is well worth while either to pay extra money for these or to propagate them for one's self. There is no comparison between the two methods for lasting results. If a hard winter kills to the ground the roses struck from cuttings, their root growth will ensure their sending up in the spring fresh shoots to take their place, instead of the shoots of the parent brier. The rose struck from the cutting is naturally balanced in proper proportion ; its root growth keeps pace with its top growth. There is no great show of the latter to the weakening of the former, for the accession of strength in both is gradual and rightly balanced and equally progressive. The period of waiting

for results is the period of development of the plant in one respect as in another, without any suffering at the root to make the top showy.

The wood chosen for striking should be that of the current season, and of early growth, so that it shall be perfectly firm without being old. The cuttings may range in length from four to eight inches, with one eye or perhaps two to show above the ground when planted. The land must be well dug and properly firmed again, and plenty of sharp sand should be incorporated with it. A trench should be made of the right depth to receive the cuttings, and these should be laid at a distance of three or four inches apart ; a second row about six inches from the first, and so on until all are planted. The following winter they may be protected by a covering of natural material, such as leaves, and the next summer they must be stopped when they require it, and not allowed to flower, so that in twelve months from the time of striking they will be fair plants on their own roots, and ready for planting, if necessary, in their permanent beds. They will not be full grown for two or three years to come, but the time of waiting will be one of progress, and the ultimate results will be of the best.

This is the most suitable month for taking cuttings of many other plants besides roses, and although I have not much to do in that respect, there is always a certain amount which requires attention. I have never grown the larger kinds of *calceolaria*, but the common yellow one seems to be a necessity as well as a perennial source of anxiety

to many of my gardening friends. The cuttings taken in September or October are, as a rule, planted in a cold frame and left to themselves to live or to die according as the winter is mild or severe. In May those that remain are bedded out behind geraniums, and are shortly after seen to wither away, scorched by the summer sun or parched from lack of moisture. There is only one remedy, and that is shade. Calceolarias like shade, and whether in cold frames or in the border do better if partially protected from the sun, which robs their root fibres of that moisture which is vital to the growth of the tender foliage. No doubt the cuttings must be kept free from too much moisture during their winter sojourn in the frame, or they will damp off; but when once started into growth in the sheltered border they will thrive the better the cooler their position is. It is wise to take cuttings in the early weeks of September to give them time to strike freely and make sufficient growth to enable them to withstand hard weather. When this comes they should be covered up close under a heap of straw or fern or mats, being given ventilation as the weather permits; and when the days get longer, and spring has set in, they should be well watered when they require it, and allowed plenty of air during the day. When planting time comes they must be moved with a ball of earth round them as big as a fist and planted in wet holes, the earth being afterwards rammed well round the roots. If the moving is done by the middle of May, which is by no means too early in a southern garden, and if they are kept sheltered from sun and frost until

they are established, the results will be all that is possible, taking into consideration the fact that they are merely calceolarias.

The hybrid pentstemons and various other plants may also be treated in this way. In the case of pentstemons the old plants will sometimes withstand the winter, and make large clumps the following year; but almost as often as not they die, and young plants must be ready to replace them. There are few things better in a garden than these pentstemons; their colour is excellent, their habit admirable, and their blooming persistent. By removing the seed-pods as they form, a good show can be had from July to November.

Petunia tries my patience more every year that she grows older. How old is she now? Certainly not under six-and-twenty, and yet she has not learnt common propriety. To-day she turned up at luncheon-time with a young man on whom I had never before set eyes, she blushing up to her hair and he looking as hideously miserable as any lover could look. Of course I was delighted to see him, for I guessed at once who he was, and as Petunia seemed smitten with dumbness on her entrance, and delayed to introduce her friend, I could do no less than give him a welcome without her aid. I smiled my sweetest smile—as a young gentleman of my acquaintance with a cavernous mouth is fond of saying—and murmured, with a friendly hand outstretched—

“How do you do? I am sure you must be Mr. Mumby!”

Petunia's colour had been vivid enough before,

but now it became of a full sunset copper hue. She said very stiffly, "I thought you knew my cousin, Mr. Jervis," and I tried to beam a second welcome no less hearty than the first while wrath was at my heart. No one but Petunia would have placed me in so awkward a predicament, and the unreasonable creature presently blamed me for the terrible moment instead of confessing that it had been of her own making.

Petunia professes that here at last is the real Mr. Mumby, and has the incredible hypocrisy to try to persuade me that there has never really been any other. I do not profess to follow the tortuous windings of her love affairs as clearly as might be desired, but I do maintain that I could not possibly have got the name of Mumby down in my mental notes unless there had been some reason for it. However, she was not to be appeased to-day by my efforts at self-justification, although I did my best to make things pleasant by assuring her that Jervis was a much prettier name than Mumby, and that she was quite right to change her mind if only for this reason. She kissed me very coldly when she wished me good-bye, and said she was afraid she should not be able to come again for some time, which might have been distressing, for I am genuinely fond of Petunia. But there is a good deal to do in the garden, and the days are shortening already, so that possibly 'tis best so.

How exceedingly tiresome are people who ought to fall in love, and will not. And how worse than tiresome are those who fall in love with persons





"MY COUSIN, MR. JERVIS"



who have not the remotest intention of falling in love with them. Here is an example. Magdalen loves Jim, who cares not for her, nor, like Rosalind, for any woman. Petunia loves Mr. Mumby (or some one of whom Mr. Mumby may stand as a type), who, so far as I am able to judge, has never bestowed a thought upon Petunia. If Jim would love Petunia, who is craving for affection, all would be well. Of course I would rather he loved Magdalen, but that does not seem a likely consummation, and as a second best I choose Petunia. As things stand at present, then, Mr. Mumby does not love Petunia, who in his default would quite willingly put up with the affection of Jim, who cares no jot for Magdalen who adores him. I believe there was a certain French philosopher who discovered that it takes three to make a pair of lovers—"Ils ont bien tort qui disent qu'il ne faut que deux pour faire l'amour; il faut au moins trois." I should be inclined to go further, and to declare that it takes four to spoil two good matches. And so life in its contrariety goes on.

Magdalen comes here and looks through Jim, as if he was merely a rather boring feature in the landscape. Jim goes to the Manor, and half the time he is there he literally does not know whether Magdalen is present or not. That, at least, is the impression left upon me as an observer of my fellow-men, and so far as Jim's unconsciousness is concerned, I am convinced that I am not in error. Magdalen's attitude is, of course, a pose, simply because she is a woman, and posing is her safety. A man who has feelings to hide can take

refuge in silence, but so cannot a woman. Silence is self-betrayal, and a pose is her haven of refuge. Jim's silence cannot be interpreted, because he has a taciturn habit and would be equally silent whether he had anything to conceal or no. Magdalen's silence would mean much. But even a woman's pose is no rampart against another woman, though impregnable to a man, so that in any event Magdalen has little chance of hiding herself from me. But as I am only an onlooker I do not count.

The time may come when a man will understand a woman so well that it will not be worth her while to pose for him. But so long as the economic condition of woman is as it is, so long will it be detrimental to her to be understood. She has more to gain by remaining a mystery. The day of perfect equality for the sexes in economic matters is as yet dim æonian periods away, and perfect freedom can come only with perfect equality. With freedom truth and sincerity will display themselves without fear of shame or detriment. But that happy time will probably never arrive to woman on our planet, and in the meanwhile Magdalen in common with the rest of her sex poses.

If only she would show Jim that she cares one jot about him, it might suggest to him the possibility of his caring for her. He is merely stupid, a fault not his own, but of his sex.

*Sept. 3.* Hardy bulbs are the mainstay and the joy of the winter gardener. They are, speaking generally, certain bloomers, and they are almost independent of favourable conditions. Even a few

degrees of frost will leave them unharmed. All they ask is that their treatment shall be reasonably careful, and I will give as shortly as possible the rules I have found most convenient for potting and flowering these valuable things under glass.

There are many persons of limited means—and many also of large means—who grudge the money necessary for bulbs more than they grudge any other garden expenditure. Bulbs are considered an extravagance, and a gardener who spends a sovereign or two on them is a wastrel in the last degree. This feeling must be a survival of the days not long departed when bulbs were a costly luxury. This is not so now. Many beautiful things can be had at a farthing apiece, or even less, and I have bought good flowering bulbs of the lovely daffodil *Cynosure* at exactly half that price. The sooner the idea is abandoned that hardy bulbs in the greenhouse are not for the ordinary grower the better. There is nothing else in cultivation so suitable for the amateur in every respect, and for the months of January and February they are indispensable. There is nothing that can take their place, although there are many things that may be grown in addition to them. I am speaking to the amateur who loves his garden, but has to be careful in his expenditure, when I put forward regarding this expenditure a word of advice. Reckon up what yearly sum you spend or are prepared to spend on your flower garden, whether in plants or in seeds, and then let three-quarters of that sum be laid out in bulbs for the greenhouse. If the garden without is of the herbaceous order very few plants

should be required to keep up the stock ; a few packets of seeds in the spring will do what is absolutely needed, and the bulbs which come out of the greenhouse in March will, if turned into the ground, form a future provision for the open-air supply. No others need be bought for this purpose, for in a few years' time the greenhouse will have yielded up as many as are wanted for the garden. If a five-pound note therefore is to be devoted to the supply of flowers, let two-thirds of this amount be spent on bulbs ; if only a guinea is available, quite fifteen shillings should be devoted to their purchase, a few pence to a packet of primula seed, and a few more pence to cineraria seed. I am taking it for granted that the garden is fairly well stocked already, and that the greenhouse possesses such necessary plants as zonal pelargoniums, cyclamens, chrysanthemums, calla Richardias, and other perennial things.

The potting soil for bulbs should not be heavy. If any directions are wanted for proportions, the following is a good average rule :—Take one part good leaf soil, one part well-rotted manure from an old hot-bed, one part coarse sand, and one part turf mould that has been cut from a meadow at least a year previously. But bulbs are generous doers, and if only their soil is not too heavy they will be likely to thrive well, even if their results are not fit for the show table.

Easily first among bulbs for the greenhouse come the white Roman hyacinths. They are not so cheap as they ought to be, but they are nevertheless indispensable. They can be potted in September, and

these and all the hardy bulbs now to be mentioned must be plunged under a suitable covering in their earliest stage. I prefer peat from a heathy wood, sifted to get rid of the coarse pieces, but sand will do quite as well. Ashes should not be used, as they sometimes give out poisonous gases which spoil the bulbs. The boxes or pots may be placed close together in the open, and then covered with at least four inches of the plunging material.

If the amateur has only a dozen Roman hyacinths they may be planted in three five-inch pots, and treated as follows :—When they have been plunged for five or six weeks they should be examined to see if they have rooted, and if the roots are getting fairly strong the pots may be put in a cold frame for two or three more weeks. Where so few are grown there is no object in having them too early, and they will be all the better for being kept out of the greenhouse for a little time, unless the weather is cold. They can be removed to the stage and brought on for any date that they may be wanted. The gardener, on the other hand, who has a hundred or more may plant, perhaps, thirty or fifty closely together in a box, moving them to the greenhouse when rooted, and they will bloom in November. The rest can be potted or boxed as required, and a succession thus ensured. But they will not consent to be kept back so long as one could wish, and for late January and February one can have the white or blue Italians, both of which are very beautiful, though not quite so early as the Romans. At the same time as these hyacinths may be potted or boxed the paper white

and the double Roman narcissi, and their treatment may be identical with that of the others. They take rather longer than the hyacinths in coming to their flowering time. The gardener need not be afraid to plant closely if economy of space is an object. The bulbs may touch each other, and will take no harm, provided that they get sufficient water after they are removed from the plunge. A sprinkling once or twice of Clay's or some other fertiliser when they begin to show bud will correct any evils which close planting may have appeared to threaten.

The above-named bulbs, if potted early and grown on in a warm greenhouse, but not placed over a stove, may be relied on for bloom from the end of November to mid-January, after which date other later kinds must, for the main supply, take their place. The chief points to ensure success are a sufficiently protracted plunge in the open, to encourage root-growth before top-growth begins, an ample supply of water, and a comfortably warmed greenhouse.

The next bulbs to think of are the Harris lilies, from which many people fail to get satisfactory blooms. Sometimes the bulbs refuse to start into life, and sometimes they rot and disappear before they can attain any growth worth considering. Yet they are by no means difficult to grow if one goes the right way to work with them. They should be potted as soon as they come, in five-inch or six-inch pots, and taken under cover when top-growth begins. If they shrivel before potting they lose something of their vigour. To allow for top-dressing



in their later stages the soil should be no nearer than an inch to the top of the pot, and the crown of the bulb may be about the same distance below the surface of the soil, which should have plenty of sand in it, and if convenient some leaf mould also. Those bulbs which are the strongest will generally be the first to start, and the weaker ones will be later, so that, broadly speaking, their value for the future may be gauged by their willingness to shoot. When top-growth has begun they must have plenty of light, and should be kept close to the glass, or they will become uncomfortably tall. As they get to maturity they will be attacked by aphids, but the horror of this and other insect pests departed with the invention of the X-L All fumigator. There need not be so much as a spider in the greenhouse in these happy days.

It is no use to grudge the spending of money over Harris lilies; the most expensive must be bought, for good ones cannot be had cheap. The best I ever saw were grown in an amateur's greenhouse of the very smallest dimensions; they bore from ten to thirteen blooms on a stem, and the happy grower of them had given *carte blanche* to Messrs. Protheroe and Morris to send him from their auction-rooms the finest bulbs that could be had, irrespective of price. Harris lilies will bear a considerable amount of forcing if required, but the ordinary gardener will flower them in March and April.

The bulk of winter bulbs may be planted either in September or in October, as best suits the gardener. I think the wisest plan is to get them

all in early, and keep them plunged in the open as long as possible. This secures sufficient root growth before the frosts begin, and the flowers are likely to come all the better for the slower growing. In any case these later bulbs require a much longer time in the dark than the earlier ones, and three months is hardly too long for them, though it may be too long for the gardener's patience. A little care will keep up a succession from mid-January to mid-March without any special difficulty. Some of these later bulbs are, like all the earlier, absolutely essential to the well-being of the flower-lover, and however little there may be to spend, a few of them must be bought as well as those I have already enumerated. Afterwards I will mention others which give a distinct joy to existence, but which nevertheless may be dispensed with if strict economy is necessary.

A flat earthen seed-pan about a foot in diameter will comfortably hold twenty-five crocus bulbs, of which Mont Blanc or the common yellow will give as much satisfaction as any costlier sorts.

Tulips for early bloom should be the scarlet Duc Van Tholl, and for succession nothing is better than double Tournesol, single yellow Chrysolora, and the white La Reine with a pink flake. I have often bought these for eighteenpence the hundred, but there has been so much demand for them of late for forcing that the price has gone up. Rose Blanche, double white, and Yellow Rose, double yellow, will follow the mid-season kinds. Let not the bulb grower be persuaded to buy La Candeur in place of Rose Blanche, for the green and

shrivelled outer petals of the older variety make it compare very unfavourably with its rival.

And now an important hint with regard to tulips raised under glass. Everyone who grows them has stamped with rage to see their beautiful blossoms withering away while yet hidden by the leaves. Tulips do not like this unnatural method of growing in greenhouses, and they turn sulky in consequence. But if, when taken from the plunge, they are placed in a subdued light under the stage till they begin to grow lanky, their mischievous habit will be thwarted, and the gardener will rejoice.

*Scilla sibirica* may be grown like the crocuses, closely planted in a seed-pan, but many more squills than crocuses will be required to make a good show, as the bulbs are smaller. These lovely little true-blue things continue to throw up spike after spike of bloom, so that, although there may be no great show at any one time, the pan will be decorative for weeks. Some bright green wood moss may carpet it, but the best use of these flowers will be indicated in a subsequent paragraph.

I have kept to the last the list of narcissi, these joys of mid-winter, which please me both indoors and out better than any other hardy bulbs. It is very important to make a good selection of them. The polyanthus narcissus, which are the least charming, cannot be dispensed with any more than the others. Some of the finest, though not the best from my point of view, are Bazelman Major and Grand Monarque, but the former is an uncertain bloomer, and the latter shares with it,

though in another way, the disadvantage of sparse flowering. It throws only one stem of flowers from each bulb, so that it is far more satisfactory to buy Mont Cenis, which, if a somewhat smaller flower, is better in habit, and three or four times as floriferous. Sweet-scented jonquils must not be over forced ; if placed in a hot place they go blind. Obvallaris, the Tenby daffodil, is an early kind, and to follow it I should choose of singles, *poeticus ornatus*, the early form of the pheasant's eye ; *Leedsii amabilis*, a lovely cream and primrose flower ; *incomparabilis Cynosure* with pale perianth and bright orange-stained cup. Of doubles, the yellow incomparabilis, or the Van Sion, and the delightful old Orange Phœnix, known as Eggs and Bacon, are the handsomest of all.

A dozen of each of the hyacinths, narcissi, and tulips above mentioned, with twenty-five crocuses, the same number of squills, and three or four lilies, can be bought for a guinea, provided the buyer takes care to avoid the most expensive dealers. Thus about two hundred and fifty bulbs would be available as a moderate provision for winter needs.

But although the varieties and the numbers above given will suffice for the grower who cannot afford a little extravagance for his winter greenhouse, there are many other lovely things which must be added to the list by those who can indulge in a larger expenditure.

My readers will have thought me guilty of a curious omission in regard to Dutch hyacinths, but the fact is that when the outlay is limited it is

better to ignore these altogether. The money spent in buying a dozen of them would buy a hundred or a hundred and fifty tulips or narcissi, which are not only incomparably cheaper, but infinitely more satisfying to the properly cultivated eye. If, however, hyacinths are essential to the well-being of the amateur gardener, let me recommend the purchase of what are called children's miniature hyacinths. The nearer the flower approaches to the standard of perfection necessary to success at the show table, the more it must offend the taste of the lover of the graceful. These miniatures, on the contrary, though they may transgress every canon laid down by the judges, approach nearer than the others to the grace and charm of the Roman hyacinths; they can be bought at a good deal less than half the price of the ordinary bulbs, though there are very few dealers who catalogue them. Messrs. Barr, however, do so, and from them they can be obtained at a very moderate price.

It is difficult to go wrong with the narcissus. In the ordinary warm greenhouse most of them can be grown to perfection, as its conditions are exactly what suits them best. Very few of them will bear forcing in the strict use of the term, but fortunately nearly all will flourish under glass if properly treated. The only two that I have failed with are the double poeticus and the double sulphur Phoenix, and I think that even with these the difficulty could be easily overcome if they were boxed early and given cold-frame treatment until the buds appear, after they are taken from the plunge. But

my space is so limited that I cannot afford to give up any of it to doubtful bloomers.

I do not admire the shape of the Leedsii section so much as those which have a broader perianth, but there is a great charm in them all. Mrs. Langtry is a particularly beautiful specimen, and its creamy cup and perianth are striking even when associated with others far more showy. In the Barrii section Conspicuus is my favourite of the less expensive varieties, and in the Incomparabilis section there are few more beautiful than Figaro. There is a great family likeness between Cynosure, Figaro, and Conspicuus; all have the orange-stained cup, but the perianth of Conspicuus is far more substantial and the petals are broader than in the cheaper ones. In point of colouring one is as beautiful as another. Johnstoni Queen of Spain is well worth growing for its graceful, uncommon shape and uniform soft yellow shade of colour. Bulbocodium or Hoop Petticoat is another uncommon form, very quaint and pleasing, though not striking, on account of its diminutive size. Emperor, of course, is very fine in the Trumpet section, and Golden Spur is equally handsome. Among bicolours I like as well as any the one known as Horsefieldii. In fact, as I said before, it is difficult to go wrong with narcissi; they are beautiful, and nearly all good doers in the hands of the amateur gardener.

Of tulips, Mon Trésor is a good yellow for pot work, Dusant a fine red, Cottage Maid a pretty pink and white. Joost van Vondel is a good white, as is also Pottebakker. Tulips require very little

drainage at the bottom of the pot, and they demand a plentiful and regular supply of water.

Snowdrops should have cold-frame treatment, if weather permits, till they are at the point of flowering. They do not appreciate the comforts of a warm greenhouse. *Triteleia uniflora* is a pretty little thing for pot culture, but where space is limited is not striking enough to take up room that would be given to more showy things. The white allium is always useful for cutting, and does well in pots, as do also the muscaris. There are many other bulbous plants which are valuable for winter culture, but at the same time not so valuable as to be actually essential.

And now as to the proper use of all these bulbous things when they come to a flowering stage. My fixed idea as regards flowers in general is that one wants them to live with; flowers that are in the greenhouse when I am in the drawing-room are of no use to me. I want them—dozens of them, hundreds of them—in my living-rooms. All through the winter I want to cram into my rooms as many as they will hold, and to have a few besides to send away to flower-loving friends. The best way to have them is perhaps in their pots as they are grown, provided that the pots are well filled and that all the flowers bloom simultaneously. But this is rarely the case, and, besides, most of my bulbs are grown in rough boxes in large quantities. There may be a dozen Roman hyacinths just coming to perfection, and twice as many hardly showing colour. With a tiny prong we dig up those that are just coming to full

expansion, taking care to bring away as much root-fibre as possible and not to disturb more than can be avoided those that are left in the box. The roots may be washed in lukewarm water and the bulbs replanted in clean sand in an ornamental pot. Then the pot should be filled up with water, the bulbs covered with clean green moss, and the result is perfection. If they require staking, three or four very thin green sticks are inserted near the middle of the clump, and each stem is tied back to its nearest stick with fine light green flax thread, care being taken that the sticks are not so high as the foliage. All the hardy bulbs which I have mentioned may be treated in this way. The effect of a large beau-pot, a foot or more in diameter, nearly filled with white Italian hyacinths, and then bordered with blue squills, is delightful, and an equally good effect can be had with yellow crocuses and white tulips, or in a dozen other different combinations. But the larger the bowl the more beautiful is the display. I have a rather shallow blue one, about eighteen inches across, which is unimaginably pretty when well planted. As the stems get long and drawn the sprays are picked for vases, and another potting-up ensues. And so the bulb season goes on.

A word must be said about the care of bulbs when they have finished flowering, Freesias must be kept in the greenhouse and receive their accustomed supply of water until the foliage begins to turn yellow. Then the water may be gradually discontinued, and when the leaves are dead the pots should be placed close to the glass, in the



sunniest part of the greenhouse, and there left with no attention whatever until potting time comes again. Unless they have this thorough baking the bulbs will not mature properly, and bloom next season will be sparse.

All the other bulbs may be turned into a cold frame, whether in or out of their boxes, care being taken in the latter case that there is soil enough round them to prevent their starving or being frozen to death. An occasional watering in mild weather will keep them going until the spring, when they can be planted in the garden or the orchard. Many will flower the following year, and all the year succeeding it, and by this means a large stock of bulbs can be secured for outdoor blooming, all of which will have served their primary purpose first of all in the greenhouse, and made a winter the happier by their beauty.

It is necessary to take up the *calla Richardias*, or arum lilies, from their summer trench in the early part of the month, to prevent their getting a check that would retard their flowering. They are kept close in a frame for about a week when they are brought in, and are transferred to the greenhouse before the first cold comes at the end of the month. The greenhouse and all the frames have been cleaned for the winter; they were fumigated with a sulphur candle when empty, and every inch of their interior has been washed with soft soap, so that insect pests will be forced to build new houses if they make up their minds to return to their old haunts. One may hope that during the cleansing operations they have taken fresh lodgings and will

not care to disturb themselves by returning to us. The woodlice, or "pigs," as *Sterculus* calls them, are some of our most persistent invaders.

Besides the frames and the house, the plants also have to be cleaned. They are laid on their sides on the ground, and are syringed with a weak insecticide both under and over the leaves. The pots are scrubbed, and everything is subjected to a severe scrutiny before being set in winter quarters. A mat placed under the pots while the syringing is being done prevents the soil from splashing up again on to the leaves and pots. This annual cleaning is well worth the trouble we take over it.

*Sept. 15.* This is the best time to prepare the violet beds for the winter. If the plants have been kept watered through the hot weather they will now be of a good size and well set with buds. Some care should be taken in filling the frames, and raw manure must never be used if a steady supply of flowers is required over a long period. There will be plenty of bean and pea haulm, old sunflower stems, or other rough stuff, with which the boxes may be filled to the depth of a foot, and the material must then be well trampled down to reduce it in compass. A good light soil mixed with a fair proportion of spent manure from an old hotbed may fill the frame to within six inches of the top, care being taken again to make the bed firm. Lift the violets with large balls round their roots, nip off any runners which may have formed, and plant closely together in the frame. If they have been properly looked after in the summer, they will begin to bloom profusely in a fortnight's time. But one caution is

most essential. Under no conceivable circumstances should the lights be put on—not even at night—until the end of November. If the weather is very cold they may then be shut, or nearly shut, at night, but not otherwise. Violets will not do well late if they are coddled early in the winter ; the cooler their treatment is, short of being subjected to severe frost, the better they will thrive. About Christmas time some good old manure may be pricked in about the roots, and if the flowers have become small and sparse they will speedily improve. At mid-winter, in a long spell of sharp frost, a few handfuls of dead fern may be strewed among the plants, inside the frames, and as much protection may be given outside as is convenient, to protect from damage the dormant buds.

## OCTOBER

*Oct.* THE work of October is very important.

1. It is now that provision is made for winter wants—or rather, it is now that it is seen what provision has been made, for in some cases nearly a whole year's forethought is required to secure a pot of bloom. Many chrysanthemums, for instance, have been growing since last Christmas, and there are very few winter subjects that do not require six months' preliminary treatment before they will reward the grower with their flowers.

My greenhouse measures fifteen feet by ten—not an extravagant size. It has a stage down each side and at one end ; a couple of shelves rather high up, also at the end ; a movable shelf, that in times of stress swings high in the roof above my head ; and a couple of benches, which—also when the need is dire—run down the centre, standing on the gravel which forms the floor. It is heated with an Ivanhoe stove, and a four-inch flow and return pipe round two sides and an end. The stage on one side is topped with a galvanised tray its whole length and width, and about six inches deep. This tray is filled with peat from a neighbouring fir wood, in which we can plunge cyclamens and other things

that dislike a draught circulating about their roots. The peat can be kept moist as is required, which is a great help in the growing of some things. The portion of tray which is over the stove is filled with sand instead of peat. This is not a desirable plunge, but in our circumstances it is a necessary one ; for where there is now sand there once was peat, which ignited by the heat under it given out by the stove, to our almost irreparable undoing.

We pack a great deal into the greenhouse. There are in it now fifty large chrysanthemums, nearly all of them in seven-inch or nine-inch pots ; seventy pots of zonal pelargoniums, eighteen of freesias, twenty of primulas, twelve of arum lilies, twelve of cyclamens, and a few odd things, such as a large pot of smilax growing up many strings for cutting ; another large one of the dwarf asparagus fern, also for cutting ; one or two winter-flowering cacti, a lemon verbena, and so on.

A large four-light frame contains other plants—cinerarias, fancy pelargoniums for the spring, Christmas roses in pots, Solomon's seal, with narcissus, paper-white and double Roman, in large boxes, just taken from the plunge. There are also numerous begonias, gloxinias, achimenes, fuchsias, and other things which made the greenhouse gay in summer.

Four more frames hold the violets, which already are yielding profuse bloom. There is one frame of the lovely Princess of Wales, whose blossoms hide a penny-piece ; these are now in perfect condition. They will be of no use at mid-winter, but will come on again in early spring. Two of Marie Louise

and one of Count Brazza's white violets complete the tale of frames given up to these flowers. Other plants are growing in the open, to yield their blossoms later than the ones that are in shelter.

In the next following pages I am going to give advice to those who have but a small quantity of glass, and are yet desirous of keeping up a stock of flowers for cutting during the winter season of the year. To persons who possess a considerable area of greenhouse accommodation I have nothing to say. They should never be wanting in blossoms, provided that proper care and a sufficient expenditure is provided. But there is a far larger class of amateur growers—those who have a small greenhouse, or perhaps a couple of greenhouses, and imagine themselves well off for flowers if they can muster half a dozen pots or vases for the drawing-room in January. To these I should like to prove that they are by no means getting the best that is possible unless they can fill their rooms as full of flowers in January as in August. This chapter, therefore, is addressed to amateur gardeners who have sufficient outdoor plants to provide flowers for cutting from March to October, and require enough under glass to keep them supplied from October to March.

The first essential is the giving up entirely and unreservedly all the bedding plants with which the greenhouse is probably half filled. In the first place, the summer bedding system of gardening is utterly wrong in principle. Spring, summer, and autumn should find its own flowers growing without disturbance at any season of the year. There may

be mansions—I have not seen them myself—which demand among their surroundings the stiff and monotonous decoration of bedding plants; but the ordinary English house is at its best in the really English garden—a garden of herbaceous plants, and roses, and carnations, and good things which have been relegated for so many years to the kitchen domains that we feel ashamed to give them, as we should do, the best places in the *parterre*. It may be said that the season of bloom of carnations, for instance, is too short to allow of their usurping the best beds. This taste for perpetual bloom on a given piece of ground is a depraved taste, and should not be encouraged.

To return to the greenhouse. When all the bedding plants have been consigned to the rubbish heap—with the exception of a few zonal and ivy-leaved pelargoniums, which will be wanted for next year's tubs or hanging baskets, if these are used—the whole of the glass-house will be available for its proper purpose. The next thing to do is to send nearly all the hard-wood plants the way of the bedding stuff. Even many of those which flower in winter cannot be usefully retained if the best possible results as regards quantity are to be gained. The amateur with but a small greenhouse cannot have these beautiful things. He cannot have azaleas, because they take up large spaces on the stage from October to February which should be given to flowers that bloom within those months. He cannot have bouvardias for the same reason, for they will not do their best in winter in the ordinary amateur's house. Fuchsias

are also *taboo* for similar considerations. From a different cause, but an equally potent one, such good winter blooms as *sparmannia*, *cytisus*, and other amenable plants are impossible; they flower at the right time, indeed, but their habit is large, or, at any rate, it tends rapidly to become so, and they take up the room of several *primulas* or *geraniums*. All these things, or nearly all, must depart in favour of soft stuff and bulbs, which will keep the house gay from October to March. There is, in fact, to be nothing on the shelves or the stages except plants that will flower in winter, and—a very important consideration—plants that can be for the most part done away with directly their bloom is over. This is the case with *primulas* and *cinerarias*, which may be thrown to the rubbish heap when their flowers are cut; *chrysanthemums* can be turned into frames, as may also all the hardy bulbs when their season is over, with *cyclamens*, *callas*, and half a dozen other things. With proper protection they will come to no harm. *Freesias* can be thrust under the stages; *pelargoniums* into a warm attic; most things, in short, can be got rid of for a time, except in an exceptionally rigorous winter, to leave the greenhouse free for flowering plants.

The conscientious reader who skims over this chapter with an inclination to act upon its advice will by this time feel very sad for his summer display under glass. But I do not for a moment intend to deny him the pleasure of greenhouse flowers in the summer months, though he may possibly be obliged to rearrange his stock of these



things. In such a house as I have described many hundreds of pots of begonias, achimenes, and gloxinias may be laid on their sides under the stages in October, and brought out and started a few at a time from February onwards, when the congestion of the house is to some extent relieved. Petunias may then be sown with a dozen other subjects that thrive well in pots and will provide a summer show. Moreover, as in all probability nothing will induce him to act unreservedly on my advice of the immediately preceding pages, he will have spared some of the best of the fancy pelargoniums and other spring flowering stuff, so that there shall be no gap between his winter and his midsummer displays under glass.

Apart from chrysanthemums, the main source of supply for some weeks to come will be zonal pelargoniums, and, a little later, primulas. Of course, all zonals are not suited for winter blooming, but there are plenty which will flower in a night temperature of  $40^{\circ}$  or  $45^{\circ}$ , and some of these should be secured. Among other good varieties may be mentioned Volcanic, Sunbeam, Lucrèce, Mikado, Nicholas II., Puritan, and the old Jacoby. The cuttings should be struck in March, and all the buds should be nipped off as they form, until September, when they may be allowed to develop. When they are once staged for blooming water should be given only when required, and no manure water permitted, for if leaf growth is now encouraged they will cease to give blossoms. These are very good for the amateur's greenhouse, as

the young plants do not require large pots, four-inch or five-inch being quite big enough ; and they may be staged so close as to touch each other, which makes them economical of space. If the gardener does not exhibit sufficient forethought to ensure a provision of these flowers, and of primulas, the early winter season will be bare indeed. Chrysanthemums, beautiful as they are, are not sufficiently satisfying to take the place of everything else, and there is always a certain amount of risk attending the culture of hardy annuals in pots for autumn use. They may turn out well or they may fail entirely. Primulas and zonal pelargoniums under ordinarily careful treatment never disappoint the grower.

Best of all the primulas I like the variety called the Star. The blossoms, though small, are thrown well above the foliage, and they are admirable for cutting, as they last in water for a fortnight. The blue kind of *primula sinensis*, too, is indispensable, and a vase or pot of it always attracts notice. The seed of this is expensive to buy at our best seedsmen's, but for a few pence a packet of it can be purchased from some of the German growers who advertise in our gardening papers. As no amount of money will at present secure a true-blue colour, it is hardly worth while to pay several shillings for seed which is only of lavender a shade deeper than Germany can supply for half a dozen pence.

In places where beds of annuals are used for a summer display the space will now be available for planting for spring. Nothing is more beautiful than wallflowers for this. The best, to my mind,

are the gold and the primrose varieties ; for cutting there is certainly nothing more telling than these two in combination. The art shades, as they are termed—the so-called salmon and mauve and purplish tints—are better omitted unless there is plenty of room for all, but the old blood-red is always beautiful. Double white daisies make an excellent border for the gold and primrose sorts, and with the red no plant is prettier than the blue forget-me-not. There is nothing new about the combination, but assuredly there are few things better.

*Oct. 11.* I have been staying for a week with Seraphina in Devonshire, and have had a very pleasant time. It may be always taken for granted that wherever Seraphina is there will be a pleasant time, or Seraphina would not be there. Even her husband seems to enjoy life, though Jim declares that his contentment is probably the usual kind of happiness in the married state—resignation after the event. Jim, as I have before indicated, has no very exalted opinion of Seraphina, but he hates to find fault with her, though Heaven knows she is faulty enough. His desire to make the best of people is in continual conflict with his healthy sense of humour, and I have never heard him say anything more severe of Seraphina than that she is careful to keep all the commandments, one at a time. After all, can much more than this be said for the best of us? Our virtues, as a rule, are wont to display themselves singly.

I return to find all our gates painted a bright turquoise blue. I should think that there is no

other place in the county which has turquoise-blue gates. Jim's guilty face, when he met me on the doorstep, betrayed his responsibility without any hope of disguise. It appears that a worthy youth in the village has lately taken to carpentering as a means of livelihood, and his master has palmed off a quantity of paint material on the guileless lad at a tempting price. He, being seized in his turn with the lust of profit-making, confided the news of his purchase to Jim, and begged permission to adorn our premises, and Jim, though he must have known full well how detestable it would look, weakly consented. The result is amazement. I cannot see why the boy, simply because he is a good boy and an industrious and dutiful boy, should be allowed to disfigure us so completely, but Jim, of course, disagrees with me. He says he thought that the boy probably knew best, and at any rate he had fully made up his mind on the subject before he broached it to Jim. I am certain that if he had wished to paint the gates orange colour, orange colour they would have been by this time, so perhaps there is something to be thankful for after all. At any rate, I did not feel justified in betraying all the wrath I felt, for Jim was obviously gloomy about some other matter, which I made it my business to discover. His tenderness for worthy and dutiful village boys is extended to the lower brute creation, and it was an interview with the village butcher, ten minutes before my appearance, which had annoyed him. He called upon Mr. Griskin to speak about some Parish Council business, and found that excellent tradesman in the act of promis-

ing his smallest son that, if he would be a good boy at school throughout the winter, he should be allowed, as a particular treat on his next birthday,



MR. GRISKIN THE BUTCHER

to—kill a lamb. Mr. Griskin made haste to enlarge on the topic to Jim, and furthermore told him that his eldest hope, who had been destined from infancy to inherit his grandfather's drapery business, had developed such a love of animals that they had

thought it best to make a butcher of him. The result so far had been successful beyond his expectations. I tried to console Jim by telling him that I had once seen a similar story labelled as a joke in the pages of *Punch*, but he did not recover his spirits the whole evening.



“WE ALWAYS LOOKS AFTER THE SEX”

For my part I was so glad to get home again that not even turquoise gates had power to dash my happiness for more than a moment. Besides, I had met with a cheering railway porter at Bristol, where, after several hours of travelling, I had to change trains, which I always find a depressing incident in a journey. I was hurrying from one

platform to another, the porter carrying my smaller luggage, when he looked back over his shoulder and said with paternal solicitude—

“Don’t you hurry, ma’am. We always looks after the sex ; it’s the only good thing we’ve got left.”

I daresay there are some persons who would fail to understand why I began to feel happy at once, and was enabled almost to enjoy the remainder of the journey.

I brought back with me a small nephew and niece on an indefinite visit, and they shock our other guests by their invariable greeting, “We’ve come to stay wif auntie because muvver’s nearly dead.” They are callous little creatures, and it is impossible to touch their hard hearts. I ventured when Basil was naughty this morning to say to him—

“If you are not a good boy, Basil, I shan’t love you any more.”

“And I’m not loving you now,” was the unabashed reply.

He is very anxious to understand the manner of his first creation, and questioned me very closely.

“Did God say ‘Let there be Basil,’ and there was Basil?”

Thereupon I thought it would interest him to hear about a great fire which I had seen when I was away, and was proceeding with a vivid description when he yawned audibly, and said—

“Yes, thank you, auntie, but now tell us about hell fire.”

I did not feel competent to describe hell fire, and my nephew has a poor opinion of me in consequence.

*Oct. 12.* The new curate has called. He is a timid, retiring creature. If one asks him a question to which an affirmative reply is clearly indicated, he says, "Certainly — I suppose so — perhaps." It reminds me of the Frenchman who, when called upon to admire Niagara, exclaimed, "It is magnificent! it is stupendous! it is pretty well!" This good young man has evidently been much kept in order. I wonder how soon he will discover that he really has an opinion of his own—or if he will never do so.

It must astonish and mystify a country population to observe the enormous differences presented by their ecclesiastical shepherds. There is in them no harmonious similarity of demeanour, such as should appear in brethren of one cloth. Dr. Capel, the late rector of a neighbouring parish, for instance, could not easily be reproduced, for which his parishioners certainly ought to feel thankful. If he passed a man who omitted to touch his hat to him, he would make haste to deprive him of that necessary gear. If the impertinent minion happened to be riding in his donkey-cart, Dr. Capel would incontinently pull him from the seat. He was, I should think, rather a naughty old parson. He had nine plain daughters of various advanced ages, and he would look round upon them as they sat at his board at dinner-time, and remark to any casual guest—

"A doosid slow thing is virtue."

One can hardly be surprised that shortly after his death, when his successor was attending a rustic labourer *in extremis*, and was pointing a moral from the parable of Dives and Lazarus, the poor old soul





HE HAD OMITTED TO TOUCH HIS HAT



on being pressed to put his own interpretation on the story remarked *con gusto*, "Why, of course, gentleman went to hell."

*Oct. 17.* I ought to know these people by this



"AND I'M NOT LOVING YOU NOW"

time, but there is always something new to discover in the rustic. He is like a half-explored land, still full of surprises for the explorer. I have been getting my poultry lately from Meshach, who is trying to make a few honest shillings out of his hen-yard in addition to a labourer's wage. I wanted a

pair of chickens for Monday, and the weather being very warm I desired him to slaughter them on Sunday instead of on Saturday. He hesitated somewhat at the order, but I did not think that even he could regard it as a deadly sin to twist a couple of necks on the Sabbath, so I did not wait for any reply. To-day I hear that he sat up on Sunday night until ten minutes past twelve with the fowls in a hen-coop in his kitchen, and then, Monday having arrived, he was able to do the deed without sin. I recollect that about Whitsuntide, immediately after his conversion, he was the only possessor of early cabbage in the village, and on a Sunday morning Sterculus cast longing eyes at his brother's cabbage-bed as he went by, and begged for a head for his dinner. Meshach said nothing. He took his great clasp knife from his pocket, opened it and laid it on the hedge, retired into his cottage, and struck up a favourite hymn on the concertina—

“The devil and me, we can't agree,  
I hate him and he hates me.”

When the hymn was finished he came back to the cabbage-bed, and sorrowfully noted a gap in its symmetry, while he replaced in his trouser pocket the knife which lay almost where he had left it. Sterculus told me the story the next day, with many grunts of contempt for his brother's “old-fashioned notions,” as he called it.

Meshach's mother, with whom he lives, is a grumbling soul, who demands much attention. She was unfortunate enough to catch cold on the day

of Queen Victoria's coronation, when there was a great village junketing together with a violent thunderstorm, and has never felt well since. That, at least, is her story. Sometimes, when she is in a grateful humour, she will give me one of her old books, of which she has a queer and inappropriate collection, acquired when she was in service sixty odd years past. They are all of a serious nature, and Meshach loves them; so my only means of keeping them both happy is to accept the volume pressed upon me by old Dame Werge, and to restore it surreptitiously on my next visit. If she ever discovers the fraud, she is acute enough to keep the discovery to herself. I could not possibly get any pleasure out of the volume she gave me on Thursday, for it has black marginal lines round every page, which recalls a prejudice of my childhood.

When I was a young thing no one ever thought of giving me any present but a book, for nothing else would have been valued by me. My grandfather, however, at one time got into an unlucky vein in his purchasing, and brought me two or three extremely dull ones in succession. They were very dreary, very religious, and abounded in very long words. Moreover, they all had marginal lines round each page. At last another present was due. I tore off the wrapper with terrible misgiving, and burst into floods of tears. There was a veritable Oxford frame of black lines round every page, and I knew that sort of book too well. My good grandfather, when he learnt my prejudice, changed it for me promptly, and took care never to get another of

the same kind. But the impression is as strong as ever, irrational as it may be.

I used to spend many happy days with an uncle who was a scholar and delighted in books, but whose limited clerical stipend forbade his indulging his tastes in this direction. He was once, however, within my remembrance guilty of a frightful extravagance, and this great event for him and for me took place when I was about twelve years old. The carpenter, undertaker, upholsterer, and general utility man of the village in which he lived was possessed, in the way of business, of a large quantity of waste paper, mostly in the form of books, and my uncle, yielding to a guilty and long-combated desire, bought a hundredweight of this book stuff for the sum of one sovereign. Stealthily was it carted across the road in a wheelbarrow to his study window, to be guiltily handed in to him at dead of night; but the tale of its discovery and of my aunt's righteous anger may not be told here. Suffice it to say that the purchase was a joy to him and to me for years. I had my choice of what I would, and I still cherish an eighteenth-century copy of *The Compleat Angler*, thumbed in my childhood by me as much as by any of its former owners. But the greatest joy of all was an old metrical translation of Euripides, which I have long since lost. Many of my childish days were made happy by it, and I would give a good deal to possess it now. I wonder if I should find in it the same magical charm that I found then. I trow not. It was only a translation, and although the best, as Goethe says, can always be translated, even the best must seem

to lack something when the critical faculty is alert, unless the translator's mental gifts are on a par with those of the original writer.

But there was one book which I loved more dearly than any that it has been my lot to touch or to read since. It was called *The Sorrows of Christine*, and I wrote it myself.

What was it all about, my first book? Beautiful to outward view I can well remember it, for it was bound in white cardboard, and edged and tied with red ribbons. The binding, in fact, gave me as much labour and anxiety as the written matter within, and this is saying a great deal, for the whole thing was a work of no mean size. The plot of the story has long been forgotten even by its writer, but I can recollect that the scenery was made in Germany, and that the hero and heroine were named Gustav and Christine. Why I chose Germany as the fatherland of my firstborn I cannot, after all this lapse of time, recall, for I had never been in that country, and knew scarce a word of the language. However, such details are as naught to the youthful novelist, and I do not doubt that I ignored triumphantly all the exigencies of manners and of tongue and of local colour alike with a lofty scorn, which—alas for middle age's disabilities!—would not come to my aid in these later days to help me over such difficulties, charmed I never so wisely. But I was in my early teens and in short petticoats when I wrote my first book, and youth is known to be infallible.

The gaudy volume was handed about in the family as a work of youthful genius, and I was not

a little proud of its immediate success. It was beautifully written in a fair round hand, and no one could complain that it was, in one sense at least, hard reading. Eventually it was lent to a more distant relative whose opinion on most subjects was considered final. It was a great blow to me when this relative returned my beloved book without praise even of the mildest order, advising me to write about children, and about English children, and to refrain from attempting German love stories until I should know a little more of my subject. I could never again endure even to think of the sorrows of Gustav and Christine, for my self-confidence was easily shaken; the book was cared for by my sisters for a while, and finally disappeared, no one remembers how. I have a dim suspicion that I burnt it; a book of which people could speak so slightly was better dead and forgotten.

My next story was a much shorter one. It dealt, I remember, with exciting adventures on the ice-floe, and the *dramatis personæ* were Norwegian, as was also the floe. The characters—if characters they can be called who were utterly destitute of character—suffered a great deal from the cold. As with my first book a knowledge of German and Germany had seemed unnecessary, so with my second an acquaintance with Norway and the Norwegian language was quite as unimportant a matter. I can recall, though, that in one place, at any rate, I tried to infuse a little local colour into my descriptive narrative; I have a distinct memory of a sentence which bears out this assertion—



"Men were so cold they forgot to sing *Gamlé Norgé*."

I believe *Gamlé Norgé* is the National Anthem of Norway, and I am glad to convince myself that in the matter of *couleur locale* my second story was a distinct advance on my first. I suppose I must have burnt this manuscript as well as the other; at any rate, it does not survive.

My third effort was of the short story order. I was about sixteen when I wrote it, and sent it in trembling hope to Dr. George Macdonald, who at that time edited a magazine which made the chief brightness of my childish life—*Good Words for the Young*. I was not kept long in suspense. My manuscript was returned to me with a kind, firm note from the editor, who, in unhesitatingly rejecting me and my young effort, advised me to put aside the pen and devote myself to study. I have a distinct recollection of burning this letter the very hour I received it—and with the letter the luckless story—for fear my family should come to know of my shame. From that day to this the fact has been locked a secret in my own bosom, and I now for the first time reveal it under press of the exigencies of truth in telling this history.

*Oct. 31.* Failure if a bitter is often a salutary experience. In gardening it is the necessary forerunner of success, since all one's best results ensue from previous failure. Now that the summer is over, it is well to consider one's failures and the reason of them, and to balance them against the successes; so I shall jot down a few things which have baffled me, not necessarily of late, but in

these seven years that have elapsed since I first took my garden in hand. It would be quite easy to make a respectable list of plants that never go wrong, of which I might take as a type the orange pot-marigold, called *calendula officinalis*, or the common Michaelmas daisy, which hold their own with the rankest weeds. But the question the earnest gardener should ask is not "What can I grow?" but "Why have I failed to grow such-and-such things?" If we decline on the lowest plane of floriculture we shall have no difficulty in getting flowers, but whether these will be worth growing or not is quite a different matter.

The answer to the question which I have indicated is not always easy to find. Frequently, of course, the difficulty lies in the nature of the soil, or in the position of the border. But these disabilities more often than not cannot be avoided. Another and a more likely reason may be the grower's ignorance of the necessities of the plant. For instance, it would be foolish to try to grow annual sunflowers in a four-inch pot on a windowsill in Bayswater, and no one who knew what the sunflower likes and dislikes would attempt such a thing. The difficulty of getting fine blossoms would be insuperable. But there are difficulties which are not insuperable, and a few of these may be worth considering.

The gardener, like the meteorologist, must be always looking ahead. To think of the future is a necessary preliminary to success; to forget it is to court failure. Every gardener should take as a motto the word "Prepare." Prepare for the

next season, for the future, for next year, or even for two years hence. To neglect this foresight may entail a long chain of failures which no amount of subsequent energy will be able to turn to success.

Pansies, in a southern county at any rate, are generally a failure, and the chief cause is the want of partial shade and moisture. To grow pansies to perfection the seed must be sown in boxes in May, each seed being dropped at a distance of an inch or so from its neighbour. This sounds a wearisome occupation, but it is not so trying as it would appear, and the number of boxes needed is a much more serious matter if a goodly collection of seedlings is desired. They should be pricked out into a half-shady bed as soon as they are fit to handle, and transferred to permanent quarters in September. The best position is one sheltered from the midday sun, so that their succulent shoots may not be exposed to the worst heats of summer. A good watering at night with tepid rain water will help to extend their flowering season, and an essential to this end is to pick off the blossoms as they fade. Nothing in animal nature is expected to perform all the functions of life at one time, and it is unreasonable to expect flowers to bloom, to set seed, and to push out new growth together. While they are ripening seed they cannot properly be expected to do anything else.

*Coreopsis grandiflora* is a valuable herbaceous plant which generally disappears after a year or two. We learn in books that it is a perennial, but experience is at variance with the writers of books

in this regard. One or two of them have said that the plant renews itself when in autumn it exhibits side shoots which have not flowered in the summer previous. This may be true, though not invariably, and I do not know how the plants are to be treated to make true perennials of them, if indeed this may be done. But in borders that are not dug over—and no properly established border should ever be so rudely treated—the seeds will sow themselves from year to year, so that in a few summers, instead of the single parent plant, there will be a colony of seedlings extending themselves yearly until they become a mighty nation, unless anything happens to stamp them out. Another sort of coreopsis, that called *lanceolata*, is a real perennial, and does not require the attention demanded by the larger and earlier variety.

I cannot quite understand why mignonette is such a fickle plant. I sow ounces of seed in all directions, but often enough none comes up. I fancy the chief reason is that the cold winds and late frosts of May kill the germinating property at its birth. The best plan is to make a series of sowings, when some will probably do well. It does not matter if the seeds come up sparsely, for one plant will cover a large area if the conditions are suitable. In fact, if the seeds come up plentifully, a severe thinning will be necessary to ensure the best results.

Why do most of my columbines turn into old women's bonnets? I cannot say, but it certainly is the nature of the plant to revert to the primitive type. Some of the best seedlings after a summer's

flowering disappear, and in their place I see plants whose flowers, instead of being pale mauve or clear yellow, are of a dusky purple. No herb can surpass this one for perpetuating its kind. To exterminate it requires much patience, for it seeds itself in every nook and cranny, and throws a long tap root down into the depths which clings so fast that a prong will hardly dislodge it.

A family that hates root disturbance is that of the hellebores, or Christmas and Lenten roses. Seldom it is that these beautiful winter flowers are seen growing to perfection. To get them well established is the first necessity, and to give them relief from summer sun and drought is the second. It is not good to move these clumps at all, but if for any reason moving must be done, then moving and dividing may be accomplished together in the height of summer when the plants are in full vigour. A fresh growth will heal the wounds of separation if it is done at that time. A glass frame will be wanted in winter if the flowers are to be protected from the frost and rain that would discolour them. The frame will help also to lengthen the flower stalks, and thus make them more useful for cutting.

Nothing is easier to grow well in our borders than the Spanish iris, and by all the rules of common sense they should flourish as well in the long grass of the wild garden as elsewhere. Garden manuals assert that they delight in a dry, light soil, and practical gardeners who write to the horticultural journals are fond of affirming that they also enjoy the company of long grass. I have not found it so.

I raised a goodly number from seed, and bought many more, and planted them all over a corner of the orchard. The first summer I had a fair number of flowers, the second none, and it is certain that this bareness was not due to any destruction of the leaves by the scythe, for the grass was not mown until August.

## NOVEMBER

*Nov.* **I** HAVE been placed in an awkward predicament, and have overheard an offer of marriage, or what practically amounts to it. But there is a story attached which involves a retrospect.

Three months ago there died in our village a blacksmith named Bill Werge, the brother of Sterculus and of Meshach. He was just over middle age, and had not married, and as he was a saving man he had amassed a little fortune, as village fortunes go. At any rate, he owned his forge and the cottage he lived in, as well as the one occupied by his mother, and another that adjoined it under the same roof. He left the forge to Sterculus, who promptly sold it and put the money out at interest, being more enterprising than other villagers who have not travelled so far as Northumberland. The cottage occupied by his mother he bequeathed to her, and the one next door to Meshach. Meshach had always been his favourite, and he left him a parting message as well.

"Tell him he'll have the cottage that's let to Mrs. Bidstraw wi' the apple tree a-hangin' over it. Tell

him there's a treasure there all for him—to seek for—to work for——” And then he died.

I know the whole story, for Nancy Bidstraw told it to me.

Meshach could not enter upon his inheritance because the cottage was let to Mrs. Bidstraw on a yearly tenancy. But he hankered after the treasure and felt sure that he knew the spot where it was buried. Everyone who has a treasure to hide buries it under a tree. The apple tree was the only tree in the garden worthy of the name, and beneath it the treasure was buried. Meshach could not get possession of the property, but he could look at the place where his treasure lay.

He strode across the fence one evening and knocked at Mrs. Bidstraw's door. It was opened by Nancy.

“Good evening, Meshach,” said Nancy.

Stupid Meshach did not detect the light that came into her dark eyes when she saw him standing on the door-sill, nor the faint blush which mounted into her olive cheek. He was thinking only of his inheritance, and not at all of Nancy. He had never thought of Nancy, though they had lived next door to each other all their lives.

“Do you want to turn us out, Meshach?” she asked in pleading tones.

“No,” said Meshach.

“Do you want to see mother? She's gone to Oldborough.”

“No, I don't know as I do.”

“Is it me you want to see, then?” asked Nancy, smiling.



"Not partic'lar," answered he.

"Then what *do* you want?" she cried, losing her patience and flushing with indignation.



"IS IT ME YOU WANT TO SEE?"

"I want to dig a bit under the apple tree to-morrer with Mrs. Bidstraw's leave."

"To find the treasure?" asked Nancy mischievously.

"Ah!" assented Meshach.

"What makes you think there's a treasure there?"

"Bill said there was. He said I was to dig under the apple tree until I come to buried treasure."

"Come out to the apple tree," said Nancy.

They went out of the cottage and stood in the little patch of garden at the back on which the old apple tree grew. At the side of the house was a well-tended flower garden, and behind was a plot stocked with vegetables. Under the apple tree was a carpet of green turf.

"It's such a pity to dig this up," said Nancy.

"I must if I be to find the treasure."

"Maybe your brother didn't mean that the treasure was a buried one."

"What else could he ha' meant?"

"Oh, I don't know," replied Nancy carelessly.

"Where do you think you'll find it? Here?"

She was standing close to the tree, and as I know Nancy Bidstraw very well indeed, I can picture the wicked way in which her dark eyes met his.

"I dunno."

"Or here?" moving to the wall of the house.

"Do you think 'tis here?"

"I dunno," said Meshach again.

"Or here?" going to the garden hedge.

"I dunno," repeated the young man stupidly.

"No, I don't think you *do* know," cried Nancy, with irritation; "an' what's more I don't believe you ever *will* know. Bill knew, but he couldn't get it."

"Couldn't get it! Not his own treasure?" cried Meshach in open-mouthed amazement.

"No, he couldn't get it."

"Why not?"

"Because I wouldn't let him."

"But how could you hinder him? The garden was hisn, an' the house too. How could you hinder him?"

"Never mind how. I did hinder him, anyway. Would you turn us out, Meshach, if I was to hinder you gettin' the treasure you're wantin'?"

"Yes, I would!" said Meshach firmly.

"I haven't no patience with you—you *be* so silly!" cried Nancy. And she turned away in a rage and ran into the cottage, leaving Meshach to wonder what ailed the maid that she should get so red.

He brought spade and pick the next morning, and began by removing the turf. The patch seemed as though it had never been tilled; great stones came up with the earth, and the ground was as hard as iron under his tools.

He dug for the whole of that day. He dug deep and he dug wide. His pick struck the foundations of the house on the hither side of the patch, and still he found nothing. Nancy came out when he was putting his tools together and laughed at him.

"Well, Mr. Moonraker," she said—for Meshach was a Wiltshireman by birth—"have you found the treasure yet?"

"No, but I'll find it to-morrow," said Meshach doggedly.

"Maybe!" replied Nancy.

The next day he dug through the gravel path well up into the garden, and close to the sty which

sheltered Mrs. Bidstraw's fat bacon-pig ; and in the evening Nancy jeered at him again.

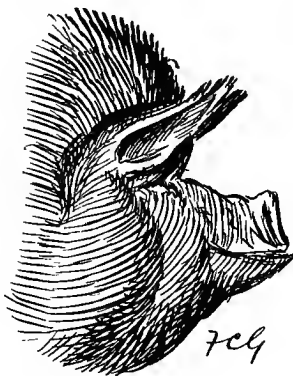
"Well, Mr. Moonraker, have you found the treasure?"

"No," said Meshach.

"Would you like me to help you?"

"Yes, I would—if you can, 'wevver."

"If I can! I could help you a deal more'n you



THE FAT BACON-PIG

know, but I'm not sure you deserve to be helped. You ought to be man enough to do wi'out help."

"I've worked hard enough to-day for two men," said Meshach, wiping his brow with irritation.

"Too hard. It isn't diggin' that's wanted for findin' treasure in these days ; it's sense an' insight, an' the power of knowin' what's good when you see it."

"You talk as if you knowed where the treasure is," said young Meshach sulkily.

"Maybe I do."

He caught her by the hand. I was in the kitchen



“WELL, MR. MOONRAKER, HAVE YOU FOUND THE TREASURE?”



and saw it, and so did Mrs. Werge. And Nancy knew that we could see it, for the garden is commanded by the kitchen window, and she had left us but a few minutes before.

"Tell me, Nancy," said Meshach ; "tell me, an' I'll give you——"

"What'll you give me?"

"What'd you like best?"

"Oh, something golden—a gold locket, or maybe a gold ring."

"I'll give you a gold locket an' a gold ring



TWO NAUGHTY GIRLS CAME BY

too if you'll tell me where the treasure is," pleaded Meshach.

"I don't believe you'll ever give me a gold locket an' a gold ring *unless* I tell you where it is, you great silly. You great big, blind, stupid old silly!"

Two naughty girls came by, and giggled over the garden hedge. They nudged each other in the side and exploded in fits of laughter, while young Meshach glowered at them from the naked roots of

the apple tree. But they stood still and laughed unabashed.

"Look at Meshach Werge an' his treasure!" they said.

"Where?" cried Meshach. But the girls had passed and Nancy was blushing.

"What do they mean, Nancy?"

"How can I tell you, Meshach?"

"Ain't there a treasure after all?"

"Not if you think there ain't."

"But be there, do you think?"

"I think maybe you might come to think there is."

"But where, then?"

Nancy went up to the wall of the house and stood beside it, and tapped the earth with her foot.

"I think it might be just here," she said.

"But I've looked just there."

"An' there ain't no treasure?"

"Nary," replied Meshach mournfully.

Nancy went close up to the apple tree and stood beneath it.

"I think you might find it just here."

"But I've looked just there. I've dug it all up. I don't believe there isn't no treasure. Is there, Nancy?"

"Not if you think there isn't, Meshach."

"He said it was under the apple tree."

"Well?"

"An' there's nothin' under the apple tree."

"Nothin', Meshach, except—me."

Meshach looked stupidly at her for the space of a minute, and then a great light overspread his



honest countenance. He caught naughty Nancy in his arms.

“My pretty dear!” he cried.

\* \* \* \* \*

“I never did hold wi’ young married folks a-livin’ wi’ older persons,” said Mrs. Werge insistently to a hearer whom she thought, I am sure, exceedingly dull of comprehension. “An’ if they likes to take that cottage at the bottom o’ the hill I shan’t put naught in their way. But I wun’t turn out o’ thissen, not fer no Meshachs as ever was, an’ they’s best not try at it.”

For her there was no beautiful idyll, but only a foresight of future personal discomfort.

*Nov.* 14. There are plenty of flowers still blooming out of doors. One of the most useful is the Margaret carnation, cut from plants carefully disbudded in late summer to ensure an autumn harvest. *Plumbago larpentæ*, with its lovely blue colouring, is useful for cutting, though it must be grown in some quantity if more than a handful of sprays is required. There are also *coreopsis grandiflora* and *lanceolata*, *phlox drummondii*, *pentstemon barbatus*, var. *Torreyi*, *antirrhinum*, and a score of other things in small quantity. For although dahlias have been cut down by the frost these hardier things are left. Under glass also there is no lack of blossom, though in less variety. Chrysanthemums are beginning to make a grand show. Charles Davis and Vivian Morel are at their best, and to my mind these are two of the most satisfactory varieties for the amateur. With

ordinary attention they make handsome flowers as well as good ornamental plants, and they never seem subject to the chances and changes which affect newer kinds. Madame Carnot is another excellent one. It never, to be sure, does its best except in the hands of the expert, but its second best is so consoling that no one need fear to grow it. Other good sorts are G. J. Warren and Mrs. Mease, sports from Madame Carnot ; R. H. Pearson, Phœbus, Golden Gate, and a kind little known called Silver Cloud. It is not a monster bloom, and has consequently dropped out of most of the catalogues, but it should be grown for its warm coppery cream colour, which is like no other that I know. Another good variety, though hardly up to exhibition form, is Monsieur Gruyer, which is invaluable for late cutting. Plants of it kept out in the open all through the autumn until the flowers show colour, and then sheltered in a cold shed at night only, will last on until nearly the end of January. The stiff, firm petals make it an excellent variety for keeping back, and I know none more satisfactory for this purpose.

I do not care to grow the big plate-like blossoms which many growers aim at. My object is to have flowers for cutting, and although we disbud freely, we are never left with fewer than nine blooms on a plant. Large flowers are suitable for shows, but for no other purpose ; and the amateur who is content with a diameter of six or seven inches is wise.

Violets are very plentiful just now, especially the beautiful Princess of Wales and the double Marie

Louise. Christmas roses—also in frames—are doing well. Primulas, zonal pelargoniums, fibrous-rooted begonias, Roman hyacinths, and paper-white and double Roman narcissi are among the flowering plants under glass. Everything looks healthy, and there is a great promise of blossom for days even darker than November.

“The blackest month of all the year  
Is the month of Janniveer,”

and for “Janniveer” I time my best show, that it may cheer us in the gloomy season when winter holds us tight in his grip, and spring seems a happiness very far off.

November is the favourite month of Sterculus. He calls it not November, but “dungen’ time,” and counts all his garden operations from it, as well as his domestic episodes. “I lost my Cousin Jemps a twelvemonth ago last dungen’ time,” he will tell you, or, “I allus begins to strike my gerzanthums d’reckly after dungen’ time.” “Loffly stuff!” he says meditatively, looking at some special mixture, “it’s a pleasure to get your ’ands into it.” It is a pleasure, however, that he is forced to enjoy all by himself, as I cannot raise much enthusiasm over that part of the gardening work.

November is not the most busy of months in the garden, but I do not know any month in which the gardener can with impunity be idle. This is the best time to sow sweet peas for next summer’s enjoyment, and the only drawback to the practice is the habit of mice to eat the seeds or ever they germinate. But mice are the garden pests which are the most easily circumvented. We soak the

peas for an hour or more in paraffin, and while they are moist roll them generously in red lead and plant at once. I have never lost seed so treated, and the trouble is hardly worth taking into account.

Roses must be planted now, and so must briers, if budding is to be done next July. I find the very best autumn rose is Ulrich Brunner. About the end of September the bed planted with these began to show flower as plentifully as if the month had been June, and it has been bristling with bloom ever since. We cut the buds in a half-expanded state, as rough winds would spoil the full-blown blossoms. There are many roses which flower in the autumn, but there are few that produce decent specimens at this time. La France, for instance, still goes freely on, but the delicate petals are ruined by the wind and by morning frosts, so that very few are fit to gather.

Spiræas for forcing are being potted and placed in a cold frame, with a covering of fibre over the crowns. Backward primulas are being shifted into their flowering pots. Begonias are laid on their sides in the pots in which they bloomed, under the greenhouse stage. Dahlias and tender gladioli, which have been left out so long in consequence of the autumn's mildness, are being stored in a cellar for the winter. The last of the wallflowers are to be planted to-day, and I am also making large patches of crocuses under two big elm trees at the edge of the wild garden. *Anemone fulgens* is also to be put out in borders. This is an annual operation with us, and the disappointment is as regular, for I cannot get them to do well.

My great difficulty in November is to prevail upon Sterculus to keep the fire in the greenhouse low enough. His aim and ideal in life is to force things on, mine to keep things back at this season, for we shall want them more later. Moreover, plants get badly drawn if they have too much warmth just now, and then their appearance suffers. All that is necessary is to keep out the damp by day and the frost by night, and a large fire is not needed at present to these ends. In the frames, too, plenty of air is required, and there is no day at this season when the inclement elements must be entirely excluded. An inch or two of air will not hurt any of the plants by day, though care must be taken that all is made safe and snug by night.

I am thankful to say that my nephew and niece left me to-day, and I am able to breathe freely again. The children of the present day seem to enshrine incredible hardness under covering as beautiful as an angel's. The modern child is pleasing only as a study, because he is in process of formation by a new system which keeps its good results for the very end of the operation. I am bound to admit that these results are a great deal more desirable, say, at the age of eighteen or twenty than those which at a similar age were visible in young people of the preceding generation. The timid, clinging type of girl, the shy, rude type of lad have given place to others whose distinguishing characteristic is independence and self-reliance. I have not the slightest doubt that Basil and Edith will be charming young people

in a few years' time, but the interval may have its drawbacks for their relatives.

They are very outspoken and truthful, like most children of the moment, and not at all greedy. Here is a specimen of the conversation which took place at luncheon the day after their arrival :—

“Aren't you hungry, Basil? Why don't you eat your ham?”

“I don't want it, thank you.”

“Don't you like ham?”

“I like *nice* ham, thank you.”

“Will you have some pudding, Edith?”

“No, thank you, Uncle Jim. I never eat pudding.”

“Indeed! Why not?”

“Because I don't want to be as fat as auntie.”

“Won't you finish your chicken, Basil?”

“No, thank you; I've had half enough already, and I want to keep the other half for the apple tart.”

All this with perfect propriety of demeanour and without the slightest intention of rudeness. They have no reticences, but speak out their thoughts as a matter of course. Their mother never allows them to be reproved, no matter what they may say or do. She tells me that it is not the custom nowadays. To admonish a child for rudeness or for disobedience might cure a bad habit, but would for ever destroy the confidence which exists between child and parent. Perfect naturalness and complete confidence are the two desirable qualities to encourage in children, and nothing must be done to stifle them. When I was a child I was subject

to periodical "squashings," to cure some trick of vanity, or of temper, or of idleness. Children brought up on modern methods are never squashed. They learn their faults through observing them in other people; they cure, or perhaps only conceal them of their own initiative, because these faults make their possessors ridiculous, or tiresome, or despicable. The moral education of children is thus practically left to themselves, and self-government, instead of beginning at the age of eighteen or so, frequently ends there. The results, at the moment when the girl breaks into womanhood or the boy develops into the man, are beautiful to the outward eye, but the process, as I have said, is irritating to the mere observer.

Basil writes what he chooses to call poetry, and this morning, before he went away, he gave me as a parting gift his latest verses, written in capitals on the fly-leaf of Ibsen's *Doll's-house*, in which, I presume, the children had hoped to find a story to their liking. But so well am I learning my lesson that I did not scold him for defacing the volume, for fear of destroying the small amount of confidence which exists between us.

"TO AUNTIE FROM BASIL.

" *Writtn after the Meat of Hownds.*

" Just as the fox  
Out of the wood,  
Not in a box,  
Wishes he could.

" Though he gets chasd  
Till he gets hot,  
Dosnt make haste,  
Therfore gets got."

“ *Written on Sunday.*

“ Good peeple always go to church,  
Good peepul never nead the birch,  
But leeve the wicked in the lerch,  
Alleluia.”

These verses inscribed on my *Doll's-house* recall an incident of its purchase. I asked Petunia to order it for me from our local bookseller, who is an entirely omniscient person where books are concerned, or at any rate so he thinks. I have never yet known him acknowledge ignorance of any book or its author. Petunia walked into his shop and demanded a copy of Ibsen's *Doll's-house*. Mr. Moulton knew the book well, but did not stock it. “I suppose you can get it,” said Petunia. “I will get it with pleasure,” said Mr. Moulton. “It is in the Juvenile Series, as of course you know.”

*Nov.* 15. Petunia is one of those persons who go in for periodical hobbies. She talks of “taking up” this or the other, an expression quite detestable, because it seems to forebode laying it down again when the inevitable day of boredom comes. But one of Petunia's hobbies has been pursued for so many years that I have hopes that she will be for ever faithful to so old a love. She is a field naturalist, and I would rather go for a walk with her than with any other person I know. Her eyes are everywhere; nothing escapes them; and I can learn more from her in half an hour by a roadside than from a dozen of the best printed authorities in any period of time which it may take to peruse them. So, to-day, when she turned up at luncheon-time and informed me that she intended to spend the



afternoon in Sole Wood, I was delighted to go with her.

Living within a few minutes' walk of Sole, not to go there at least once a week is a positive sin of omission. It is a beautiful place. The short herbage where it remains is a wonderful ochreous tint, as though laid on with opaque colour. Large warm brown patches of fir needles carry on the tone scheme, and the zigzag paths trodden for short cuts by farm labourers passing through are of the same brown. Most of the trees are Scotch firs, but there are large spaces filled up with the pale yellow of larches, shading back to a delicate green which blends them into the firs. Beeches and hornbeams also are a glorious colour, and the acres of six-foot fern that reach far away over the hilly ground, and retire from other parts in favour of heather and the yellow grass, give softness to the wood. Such an uneven piece of ground it is, sweeping down to a hollow in which a small rush-fringed pond reflects the 'sky's blue, and lends itself to endless imaginings of extent until you come close to it and realise its narrow limits. The overflow runs away down the hill, still hiding itself in the midst of woods, and tradition has it that a communication exists between this pond and the river in the valley a mile away. To prove the matter, local tradition continues the tale by telling of a duck which, many years since, was thrust under the water at the point where the subterranean passage was supposed to have its beginning, and was subsequently found swimming gaily on the distant river. The evidence has never been considered inadequate, and the point

is reckoned as having been triumphantly proved. But there is endless scope for tradition at Sole, which is possibly the old Syntri Weg, or Solitary Way, of Anglo-Saxon charters.

Coming down on the pond the water looks black, the sky-line being so high that only the dark firs are reflected. A delightful water plant, the leaves in shape like an adder's-tongue fern, covers the edges of it, and great bullrushes stretch out far into its centre in irregular patches. Other minuter growths are mixed up with these; the place is a very paradise for the pond naturalist. Flocks of wood-pigeons have their hiding-place near it, and break the stillness with their soft cooing. There are fairy rings, too, in the grassy parts, and glorious pink and orange toadstools under the trees. But words are feeble and inadequate to describe the delights hidden away in those few acres of ground.

I am generally intent during a walk on getting some graceful wild bouquet for the drawing-room, and presently as we went along we came upon a sweet brier, dismantled of its leaves, but gay still with beautiful hips not yet eaten by the birds. A Japanese effect in the old incense burner was plainly indicated, and I was in the act of cutting a fine branch when Petunia grasped me by the arm.

"Take care!" she cried; "oh, it's too late. What a pity!"

"What is the matter?" I asked.

"Do you notice that twig swaying a little as you hold it? Look at it closer—what do you see?"

"I see a little brown twig, side by side with other little brown twigs."



SOLE POND



"Touch it."

I touched it, and the little branch seemed suspiciously soft.

It was a geometer caterpillar, so cleverly disguised that I positively could not distinguish it, except by feeling, from the branch which supported it. Wonderfully had this insect protected itself by its extraordinary resemblance to the twig on which it had intended to spend the autumn. The hind claspers fitted tightly into a groove of the brier's main stem, the head and true legs being crumpled up into the appearance of a shrivelled-looking twig. With a silken thread or two it had fastened itself into a fairly secure position, there to pass its time of waiting before becoming a chrysalis.

"Show me something else," I said to Petunia.

"November is a particularly bad time for finding examples of protective resemblance, but we will go along the hedge and keep our eyes open."

We kept our eyes very wide open indeed, but nothing happened again till we reached the pond. Petunia would have told me the Latin name of every weed in it, but real live adventures with caterpillars or other insects are far more interesting to my mind than that section of science which someone has described as "all names and no powers," and so we raked the water with long branches to discover fresh wonders. And, sure enough, something turned up at last. We pulled in a tendril of the pretty American weed called *Anacharis*, and remarked that it seemed to have taken to growing by side shoots instead of in its usual straight fashion. Abnormal appearances always excite Petunia, and

she examined the weed very carefully as it lay in the water. The wind blew it towards us, but surely the little frond-like excrescences had independent movements of their own, which carried them backwards against the wind sometimes for a moment. We secured a portion of the spray, and discovered that the lateral fronds were in reality caddis worms living in unwonted houses. Many a time had I found them moving slowly at the bottom of the water in their tiny tenements composed of pebbles, sticks, and shells. But here they were climbing near the surface on the *Anacharis*, which they had so cunningly imitated with little bits of stalk bound together and sticking out crossways, that one's first impulse was to suspect the weed of unnatural growth rather than to regard that growth as the home of a little colony of caddis worms.

"Tell me more about caddis worms," I said to Petunia.

"I once assisted at the *début* of eight," she answered, "which I had kept in a bell-glass aquarium. It seemed to me one morning that the largest of them looked very uncomfortable, and appeared to be struggling inside his tight little house. At last he wriggled his tail out of it—a very ugly little tail. I had never before seen more of him than his head and four of his front legs. Wriggle, wriggle, wriggle, he went, until I thought that he must break in half, but I found he was only trying to discard his old tail, so useful when he had to cling to his house, but no longer needed when he was starting for airier regions. He walked painfully up a small twig, and when

he reached the surface of the water he waited awhile."

"What was that for?"

"Perhaps to take more breath, but no doubt also to dry his new clothes. Very mean and crumpled they looked. I doubted if there could really be four serviceable wings tucked away in so small a compass; but gradually they opened out, and to my delight the little creature spread them and flew away into a new world."

"Do you think," I asked, "that he would find his greater dangers compensated by his larger outlook upon life? Do you think he would ever regret the monotony and the comparative safety of his watery home? Do you think——"

"Don't be silly!" said Petunia.

We searched in the deep carpet of dead leaves in hopes of finding a butterfly or a ladybird tucked away for the winter, but none were to be seen. The total way in which the common butterflies contrive to disappear with the sunshine is wonderful. Some expose themselves freely on surfaces harmonising with their colours, but they are none the less difficult to distinguish even though the searcher may be gazing intently at them the while. Others dig down among thick leaves, or are buried by autumnal storms to emerge safely when spring has come back to the world. A remarkable example of protection is seen in the Herald Moth, which manages to live through the winter in complete safety. It is a bright red in colour, very similar to a dead beech leaf, and over the red are scumbled a few white spots resembling fungoid

growth. No bird would want to eat an object which appears to be merely a piece of vegetable fungus. But the moth has a pair of bright eyes, which would betray its identity and its fitness for food to the enemy, and to render it quite secure these eyes must be hidden. So at periods of rest it covers up the tell-tale orbits with a tuft of hair which springs from beneath the antennæ, and when spring comes and the moth is ready to fly again it can bring the antennæ forward to shake the tufts from before the eyes. So it is enabled to pass the time of danger, when its natural adversaries are hungry, in perfect safety; and in the spring there are millions of other insects which the birds may prefer, so that it may live to die a natural death probably in May or June.

"Now do use your own eyes for once," said Petunia in her uncomfortable, rather blatant manner, as she stopped before a bare stretch of hedge on our way home and put on her professorial appearance.

It was easy enough to see—a round brown case about the size of a thimble, but without any opening for the finger. It was hidden away among the twigs which formed the hedge, and adhered to one of these twigs quite closely. It was evidently the home of some insect, and he had contrived it so cleverly that it would have been cruel to disturb him in his fancied security. It was quite a common insect, Petunia said, with the simple little name of *Trichiosoma tenthredion*.

"I once took a similar little house home with me," she said, "and asked a learned entomologist



what sort of insect had made it. But although he had often seen it he had never taken the trouble to watch for the owner's appearance in the spring. He could not bother himself with anything but lepidoptera."



A LEARNED ENTOMOLOGIST

"But I thought he was an entomologist?"

"He was a specialist entomologist, and the specialist will not take the slightest interest in a two-winged insect if his mind is set on collecting four-winged insects, although the most interesting life-histories may be going on under his nose."

"Then how did you find out about the little house?"

"I had to wait several months until its owner showed itself. One day a perfectly clean section was cut out of the cocoon, and a four-winged bee-like insect emerged. I did not know any bee which was in the habit of choosing this sort of residence for the winter, so I had to watch and compare until I finally concluded that it was a sawfly."

"Then why did he look like a bee?"

"Thousands of years ago he began probably to develop a little bit of yellow on his body, and in the course of time by a process of selection he became more and more bee-like, until now it needs more than a casual glance to tell the two apart. Bees have stings, and the more the sawfly resembled a stinging insect the more likely he was to escape his enemies. Have you ever noticed towards the end of the summer an unusually large number of big buzzy bees?"

"Of course I have."

"Well, those big buzzy bees are nothing more than two-winged flies which have gradually become so like bees that their enemies—birds as well as men—have come to leave them alone, though they are as devoid of weapons as the common housefly. They merely imitate the bee for their own protection."

"What a joke the whole thing must be to them! Do you think they are really able to enjoy it? Are they laughing up their antennæ while we pass them by with a shudder?"

"I cannot bear to hear a serious subject lightly treated. Only a very frivolous person or an idiot would do it."

"And which am I, dear Petunia?"

"I don't think I have ever considered you frivolous," said Petunia, in real distress. Nothing but a strict sense of duty could make her hurt my feelings; but this sense—the sixth sense—is very highly developed in Petunia as in many other persons, and her friends sometimes suffer in consequence. I think she began to feel sorry that she had been unkind, so she brought out from the region of her heart a letter received a week or two since from a friend in South Africa. She gave me to understand, without resorting to definite words, that the friend was her cousin, Mr. Jervis, who is in the South African Police; but I am not sure that this is fact. Mr. Mumby has never been properly accounted for, and I am justified in suspending judgment in the matter.

"‘The beasts here are a very cunning lot,’" she read, "‘and their mimicry borders on dishonesty. Some butterflies have wings just like a leaf, with the veining and all complete, and there are others which display greater cunning than that. They know that some of their friends are provided with little poison bags, which render them exceeding harmful to the tummies of birds and other murderous foes. Well, these little creatures, from financial or other reasons, can't run to a poison bag, so they imitate their neighbours' coats, and are gradually discarding their own national dress, so that only the wily naturalist can tell them from the

poisonous sort. Where foes are scarce it is only the lady who assumes the disguise of safety, as she has to stand by and look after the family; but the male wears his old uniform like a man, and runs the chance of getting a mauser bullet (or its equivalent) into him. Some of the ladies are even leaving off wings, and they pretend it is because it makes them look like stalks, and that they merely do it so as not to attract attention; but I fear it may only be from some slavish following of fashion, which has decreed that wings are not worn this year. How I wish I could see you——' Oh, that has nothing to do with the subject!" said Petunia, hastily folding the letter.

A very fascinating book to which Petunia first directed my attention is Mr. E. B. Poulton's *Colours of Animals*. It would be impossible for a non-specialist reader to give any just idea of its scope, but even the ordinary person to whom the subject is interesting may be permitted to enjoy it in a semi-ignorant fashion. Mr. Poulton begins by tracing the significance of colour and its direct physiological value, and then proceeds to the study of protective and aggressive resemblance and mimicry. Judging from my own case, there must be many persons walking this globe who have never made use of their eyes until perhaps some happy accident or the casual remark of a naturalist has forced them to realise that even in nature things are not always what they seem.

By far the most widespread use of colour, as Mr. Poulton points out, is to assist an animal in escaping from its natural enemies, or in securing its prey.

The former is Protective, the latter Aggressive Resemblance. In Protective Resemblance the animal escapes notice by harmonising in colour with its surroundings, or by resembling some other creature in which its enemies feel no interest. Sometimes the animal will resemble an object which is attractive to its prey, and sometimes another which it desires to injure. These various conditions are delightful to read of in Mr. Poulton's pages.

Protective mimicry generally shows itself in the adoption of warning colours, which are assumed to help its wearer to survive natural dangers. I suppose that if we humans were merely an inferior race of beings on this globe and liable to be preyed upon by a species of creatures ten times our size, our first object in life would be so to protect ourselves as to reduce danger to the smallest possible dimensions. If, for instance, we discovered that our enemies never ate any of us who were coloured a vivid scarlet, I imagine that by degrees, through a process of selection, we should develop into scarlet men and women for our own protection. The giants, in the first instance, would have some reason for avoiding prey of this colour. Probably in a past age certain of their ancestors, when men were still white, would have come upon a family of bright red specimens, and, having eaten, developed an indigestion which brought them to an untimely end. The other giants would not only eschew scarlet men, but would fancy that everything that resembled a scarlet man was unfit for food. And so the white men would die out and the pale pink men

would in the course of many generations be represented by scarlet descendants, or else by none.

And thus it is with insects and their warning colours. An animal that "tastes nasty" is wise to advertise the fact, and those that feel a prejudice against the idea of being eaten are also wise in imitating—though unconsciously and unintentionally—those which are unpleasant to the taste, so that they also may escape.

There are many examples to be found in the insect world. The ladybird is a most nauseous mouthful, offensive to any enemy that should attempt to make a meal off it. It is coloured red and black in a pattern easily recognisable, and thus escapes destruction. The wasp and the hornet are provided with stings which might cause the death of an attacking enemy. But in the struggle they also might die, therefore they provide themselves with a yellow and black uniform which their foes are careful to avoid.

But there are many insects still left to be preyed upon—insects perfectly edible and quite delicious to the palate, and these have to protect themselves. They set about doing so, in many cases, by imitating either the inedible or the stinging insects. Some of the moths are very successful in this respect; those, for instance, which are called the hornet clear-winged moths carrying their resemblance to a hornet or a large wasp so far that many human beings would make a hasty departure when they appeared. These moths are so careful to carry out the illusion that, when threatened, they even waggle their tails about, as if they were going

to sting, although they are quite devoid of the power of doing so.

In the Filippine Islands there lives a grasshopper of much discernment. He has remarked the appearance of the ladybird, and its immunity from predatory foes ; so he has gradually acquired a rounded shape and a general scheme of colour imitating that unpleasant little beetle, and thus he escapes his enemies. Another example is that of the leaf-cutting ant, which is common in tropical America. Every ant, when he goes home to tea, carries with him a leafy umbrella about the size of a sixpence, and another class of insects in the neighbourhood also make a point, when they are going home, of pretending that they too are indigestible little ants, and imitate even the ant's leaf very closely by a thin expansion, which deceives all but the most acute observer.

There are spiders which imitate ants, and hold their forelegs as if they were antennæ. They know how delicious they are to the birds, and how unpalatable are the ants, so they protect themselves by mimicry. And some South American caterpillars even imitate snakes. They have eye-like marks on each side of two of the body rings, and when they are frightened they draw their rings together in such a way as to exhibit the apparent eyes, which, when seen through leafy boughs, give an inconspicuous animal a terrifying appearance.

A still more curious effect can be seen in the caterpillar of the puss moth (*Cerura vinula*). This larva, when undisturbed, has no very uncommon appearance, but as soon as it is discovered it with-

draws its head into the first body ring, and presents to the astonished observer a large flat face, which is a greatly exaggerated caricature of a vertebrate countenance. This caterpillar is so alarming in appearance that a certain learned entomologist who saw it for the first time was afraid to touch it when it assumed its terrifying attitude, and appeared to glare at him with its two eye-marks, resembling jet-black eyes.

When we thus see how cleverly an insect can protect itself against its natural foes by assuming warning forms and colours, it at once strikes the careless observer that the remarkable thing is that more species have not availed themselves of the process. We see about us on a summer walk two great groups of insects—those which so closely resemble surrounding objects that they are almost indistinguishable from them, and those which are so brilliantly coloured that they must attract attention from every living creature. We are quick to conclude that the brightly coloured ones are protected by flavour or texture from death by hungry enemies ; and it seems absurd that the other duller creatures, which are only protected by a certain resemblance to their surroundings, should not have adopted a more aggressive means of self-preservation. There must be some principle antagonistic to such a mode of protection, and this principle would be found in the too complete success of the method. If a very common insect which formed the staple food of some animal took such a means to protect itself, the predatory animal would be forced to eat unpalatable food to avoid starvation.



In the course of time the unpalatable food would be so familiar that custom would render it desirable. If once the enemy was driven by hunger to eat largely of any such insect, it would come in the end to devour with relish the food which at first it ate only under sheer necessity.

There is but little doubt in these days that animal colour must have been in the first place non-significant. By the process of natural selection it has become in many instances significant. Mr. Poulton is a firm adherent of Darwinism, and, like that great biologist, considers natural selection as the one solid foundation upon which evolution rests. He points out the direct testimony to this view which has been brought to bear on the subject, and comes to the conclusion that experiment would prove all mimicked species to be dangerous or disagreeable to the enemies of their class, and that all mimetic resemblances are due to natural selection.

## DECEMBER

*Dec.* **T**HIS is the Day of the Unconquered  
25. Sun—*dies invicti solis*. To-day seems to justify the patristic choice of Christ's birthday anniversary, for we have been rejoicing in the sun's glorious brilliancy since early dawn, and there is even warmth in his rays.

My labours of Christmas are at an end. I have tied up, labelled, and myself distributed parcels to two hundred and ten children and old people, not forgetting the shepherd in the distant field known as Cunnigaw Hill since the Saxon days when perhaps a king owned it. It is always the shepherds who are apt to be forgotten at times of rejoicing, and a special effort is entailed to provide some pleasure for them. The season's responsibilities and the day's duties being alike well over, I can spend an hour in the greenhouse before darkness drives me indoors. It is weeks since I have been able to give a whole hour to my plants, and I know no greater refreshment to the tired mind and body than to get away into their company and pore over every growing stem and leaf and note their rate of progress and their prospects of a speedy delivery of their tender blossoms.

December is a month when every bloom is valu-

able. If the flower famine ever threatens in the well-managed greenhouse it is between the winter solstice and mid-January. Just now, for instance, I have fewer varieties in bloom than at any season of the year, though luckily there is no diminution in the general bulk.



THE SHEPHERD ON CUNNIGAW HILL

Apart from chrysanthemums, the most useful flower for the amateur from October to December, as I think I have said before, is the zonal pelargonium. Provided that true winter varieties are stocked, there can hardly be too many plants on the shelves. But three months of continued flowering will naturally result in some exhaustion, and by the

end of the year other plants must take the place of the geranium as a mainstay of the gardener. Nothing is better suited for this purpose than the primula, which is as easy to grow as the geranium, and can be provided in almost equally generous quantities to tide over the season of threatened famine before the succession of bulbs come in, which will be about the middle of January. Cinerarias are almost as useful as primulas, but in a small house very few can be maintained, as they are worthless unless well grown. It is not generally recognised that cinerarias are admirable for cutting if the flowers are picked before they are expanded to their fullest. I have had them in vases for ten days or a fortnight, but it is necessary to change the water every day, and to give them good-sized vases.

I said in a previous chapter that I would describe the best way to enjoy hardy bulbs in the drawing-room, so I will give my experiences here.

I had a few Roman hyacinths in bloom at the end of November, but the main supply came in about a fortnight ago. I have a blue basin, in shape and size rather like a shallow wash-basin, but of a good porcelain, and having the design painted all over the outside. It is sixteen inches in diameter, and holds about eighteen or twenty bulbs. We first fill the basin half full of sand, then dig up with great care from the box of hyacinths all those bulbs whose flowers are on the point of expanding. The roots are preserved as nearly intact as possible, and are dipped in lukewarm water to cleanse them from the soil, before

being replanted in the basin of sand. More sand is then strewn over and around them to keep them steady, and finally a layer of moss is laid over the roots. The sand is kept wet, and so long as this point is attended to so long will the bulbs thrive as well as though they were still in their original boxes. My bulbs this year are the best I have ever had. Each one is throwing up at least three or four flower sprays, some as many as nine, the new shoots growing up from below, and coming to as full expansion in their fresh quarters as if they had never been disturbed.

A big beau-pot has a number of double Roman narcissi treated in the same way; and a third contains paper-white narcissi. A thin green stick should be inserted deep in the sand at the middle of the pot, rising to within a few inches of the top of the leaves, and to this stick each flower stem can, if necessary, be tied back invisibly with a fine green thread. It is worth while to take considerable preliminary pains with an arrangement of this sort, because it will last in good condition for two or three weeks at least, and will be immensely admired by all who see it.

I daresay there are gardens and greenhouses which are so large in extent and so well stocked that they may be depended upon to give sufficient results without the need of any special expenditure of trouble. But the small gardener who, like myself, wishes to get large results from a limited space, will find that the secret of success lies in unwearying effort. Nothing must be neglected at any season of the year; systematic culture and

tendance must become machine-like in their regularity. This habit is easy enough to arrive at when one begins to trace how failure comes from disregard of elementary principles. For instance, I rely on zonal pelargoniums to fill up gaps in the last three months of the year. If we fail to strike them early in March, delaying propagation for a month or two, the plants will not gather vitality enough in the summer to blossom when I want them. They will do their best perhaps in January and February, when bulbs are plentiful and the geraniums are not so necessary as in the darker days of late autumn.

No doubt the ideal practice would be to prolong the season of things by having a succession to come on when the first show is over. But—again to instance the useful pelargonium—fifty pots of these timed to blossom in February, and kept carefully disbudded until early in the year, would take up room on the shelves which should be devoted to plants flowering before that date. Of course, if the greenhouse area is considerable this may and should be done; but in a limited space economy of time and of room is so important that it would not pay the amateur to deviate from the rules which common sense lays down in the matter.

And to the owner of a small house I may give another useful hint. There is no room in it for rubbish, or even for inferior varieties. If a geranium flowers sparsely or with a short footstalk which makes it useless for cutting, throw it away. If cinerarias come a bad colour, go to a different seedsman for your next seed. If freesias are not

full grown, reject them ; if chrysanthemums are bad doers, fling them on the dust heap. Never keep a plant that is not one of the best of its kind for your purpose. It is just as expensive to keep a greenhouse fire going, and labour paid, for bad things as for good things, and the results are not comparable. I have been at some pains to impress this maxim on Sterculus for several years past, and I was amused not long since to discover that at last he had learnt his lesson. I happened to make inquiries for a plant that he had long cherished against my reiterated wishes, but I had not liked to condemn it utterly, as he had received it from somebody as a present to himself, and had passed it on to the greenhouse.

"What *I* says," he remarked, eyeing me severely, as though he was repeating an oft-given lesson to a refractory pupil—"what *I* says is that we haven't got room enough in a little place like ours for rubbish. Bad things is as expensive to grow as good things, and I don't hold wi' having nothing but the best."

I heartily agreed with him, and succeeded in looking, I hope, as though the idea was an entirely new one to me. The main thing was that he had come round to sound views at last.

*Dec. 26.* We had a pleasant little party of three last evening, Magdalen and ourselves. She, usually so reserved, was full of life and gaiety, which gave her another charm in my eyes. She is always good to look at, with her tall, lissom figure and beautiful face framed with its bright brown hair ; but she is not always attractive to the general,

because she can be not a little repellent when the mood takes her. But last night she was her brightest and gayest self. There was no coldness displayed for Jim's benefit, as has been so often the case for a long time past, and he was allowed to enjoy her society, if he would, without stint or reserve. I told her about Nancy's scene with Meshach, who now regards himself as her fortunate lover, and we all laughed over it together.

"Come now, Magdalen," I said, "what would you have done if you had been in Nancy's position?"

"What should I have done? I should certainly not have done as Nancy did, though perhaps she is almost justified by the event."

"Wouldn't you have showed him that he cared, and that you cared?"

"Most certainly not, for I should not have cared."

"But if you *had* cared?"

"If I had cared for him no one would have known it, not even myself. Or if myself had had a faint suspicion of it I should have treated myself as a foolish child."

"But given the fact that they loved each other, and that Nancy was convinced of it, don't you think she did right?"

"Oh, I daresay she did right—for Nancy," said Magdalen carelessly. "People's ideas vary, that is all."

"But," I persisted, "you acknowledged that she is justified by the event."

"I said almost justified—perhaps. I don't think any woman is justified in risking rejection by a man."



"But you might also say, if you want to be strictly reasonable, that no man is justified either in risking a refusal from a woman. And where should you be then?"

"I should be exactly where I was before," laughed Magdalen; "but probably you mean where would *he* be."

"Yes, where would he be?"

"He would be just where he ought to be," said Magdalen, with some heat, "at the feet of the woman he loves. But if she loved him she would see that he was not there long."

"But if she didn't love him?"

"Oh, then it wouldn't matter."

"Yes, it would matter, for you would have placed him in a position which you would consider humiliating for her. You are not reasonable."

"It isn't a case for reasonableness. There is no reason in any aspect of the position. If you want reason you must have suitable marriages arranged at a central bureau."

"But given the present state of things, I don't see why a woman should not show a man that she loves him."

"How should she show him when perhaps she won't show her own heart? No, he practically commands the position in being the person who has apparently the sole right of choosing. Let him have its disadvantages, too, in being liable to rejection."

"I don't think the least deserving man in the world ought to be liable to rejection, if rejection is so unpleasant as you seem to imagine. He ought

to know whether a woman loves him before he asks."

"I think in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred he does know, or he might know, at least, if he chose to exercise common sense."

"But," I said, taking her at a disadvantage, "you contradict yourself, for you say that a woman is so unwilling to be the only one who loves that she will not own even to herself that she loves. If she will not own it to herself, how shall she show it to him? And if she does not show it to him, how shall he know it? No, you don't expect him to exercise common sense; you expect him to be superhuman, which is unreasonable."

"As I said before, reason has no place in the matter," answered Magdalen loftily, "so that I cannot be blamed for want of it. Where there is no reason it would be superfluous to attempt to manufacture it in the person of a single individual."

That is the way Magdalen gets out of difficulties when she is hard pressed. Jim only laughed. Like most men, he detests women with logical minds, and a woman who could bring an argument to a satisfactory and perfectly fair conclusion would have no merit in his eyes.

After he had taken Magdalen back to the Manor and had settled himself in an armchair for his last pipe, I thought it advisable to continue the conversation.

"Talking about Nancy," I said, "what do you think of the matter? Do you consider that she was justified by the event?"

"No, I do not," replied Jim.

“On what grounds?”

“That by taking the initiative she lost something so precious that its loss was irremediable.”

“What did she lose?”

“If you don’t know by instinct what she lost,” replied Jim, deliberately puffing away at his pipe, “not all the explanation in the world would convey it to you. But you do know.”

“At any rate, I deny that you are right in looking at the thing from that aspect. You are old-fashioned and narrow and utterly mistaken. You are conventional and ridiculous. You are——”

“This is the sort of argument I really enjoy,” said Jim. “I was afraid I should lose my affection for you when I heard you demolishing Magdalen’s fallacies. But now I know that you are no better—or no worse—than she is, my mind is relieved about you. It is bedtime. Shall I light your candle?”

To attempt to get at Jim’s real self is as futile as the effort to reach the North Pole.

A capital occupation for December evenings is the planning of effects for next summer. If annuals are much used a good deal of thought will be required for their right selection and juxtaposition, and even if nothing but perennials are grown there is still scope for some foresight and judgment. In February the first of the seeds will have to be sown, and these should not be chosen or ordered at random, so that a long winter evening or two may profitably be employed in thinking out a colour scheme, or in devising fresh combinations.

It is a good plan just now to make a round of

the rose-beds and to remove faulty stakes. The autumn gales will hardly have permitted every one to remain intact, and the ground is soft enough during most of December to allow weak supports to be replaced by strong ones. In January we may be frost bound, and the standard trees might have to wait long for adequate support if their need of it is not discovered now.

In the greenhouse and storehouse it is advisable to look over begonia bulbs, dahlias, gladioli, and other such things. Those that may be rotting will be better on the rubbish heap, and care will prevent others from following them. The damp fogs of the month are in themselves sufficiently dangerous to plants under glass without the added risk of decaying vegetable matter within. Dead leaves should be removed as soon as they fall, or sooner, and care must be used in watering not to sprinkle the house and stages unnecessarily.

Cinerarias coming into bloom will be the better for weak applications of manure water every three or four days, but it is important not to allow the flowering zonal pelargoniums to enjoy this luxury. Manure water is beneficial to them in their growing season, when root and leaf have to be encouraged to unite in making good plants. But if it is given when they are in full flower they will immediately put forth large efforts for improving their foliage, and the flowers will greatly diminish in number and perhaps cease altogether. I lost more than one season's bloom through *Sterculus's* well-meant generosity to them in early winter.

The best quality of bulbs is their perfect willing-

ness to remain in a cold frame, with proper protection, until the greenhouse is ready to receive them. Twenty degrees of frost in the open will not hurt hardy bulbs in well-protected frames. As the soft-wooded plants go out of bloom, and are either thrown away or hidden in some corner until they require attention again, the boxes of bulbs may be moved into the greenhouse to continue the winter supply. Snowdrops are better left in the frames until the buds are formed, or even until the blossoms are partly expanded, and there are other things which will not suffer under this treatment. I have this winter two or three boxes of narcissi, the double Roman and the paper-white, whose flowers are actually opening in the frames, and although this might not be possible in a severe and continued frost, it is wonderful what a little extra protection will do for bulbs.

There are various other things in bloom, though not as yet in any quantity; these are cyclamens, freesias, cinerarias, arums, or *calla Richardias*, Christmas roses, the scarlet Duc van Tholl tulips, scillas, and muscaris of sorts, chiefly the beautiful Heavenly Blue variety. Chrysanthemums still abound, thanks to the cold treatment which the latest plants have had, and I expect to enjoy them for quite another fortnight, though they will be but few towards the end of it.

Another useful plant that has an extended flowering season, and is now at its best in some of my neighbours' houses, is the fibrous-rooted begonia Gloire de Lorraine. I should work up a stock of it but that I have discovered that we have not warmth enough to flower it when I want it most.

Petunia has employed her Boxing Day to good advantage by coming over to see me after an absence of some weeks. She was rather amusing, which is not her wont, unless without intention. She told me that she had just come from the Cottage Hospital at Oldborough, where she had been asked to pay a visit to a protégée of her Vicar. The woman was evidently suffering from some injury to her arm, and Petunia asked what ailed it.

"Oh," replied the patient, "it was bitten by a lady friend."

The hospital is situated, appropriately enough, next to the churchyard, and a newly made grave attracted Petunia's attention as she passed. Like a good many other people, she can never resist the temptation to examine funeral wreaths and their inscriptions. The uppermost one bore a large card inscribed—

*"With deep sympathy from his widow and children."*

There is a touching as well as a humorous suggestion about this. The survivors evidently were convinced that they had the best of it, and sincerely commiserated the corpse.

Petunia was very happy. Her affairs seem to be arranging themselves comfortably, and I have no doubt that before long the great news will be sufficiently authorised to allow of its being announced to who cares to hear it. But she is still a little anxious. She dreamed three nights ago about her toes, and as if this was not a sufficiently bad omen, she dreamed the next night that she was eating fish. So she has intervals of despair alternating

with her happiness. Where Petunia gets her superstitions from is always a marvel to me, but one may do anything with her except laugh at her, and luckily her narrative of hopes and fears passed off without any discordant element.

Petunia has a new Vicar. He is a young gentleman of very pronounced High Church views, and at present he appears to be alternately the pride and the despair of his parishioners. Since he is not essential to Petunia's well-being—as I shall to my dying day believe that for a while his predecessor was—she can enjoy a sly joke at his expense. It seems that a poor woman of his flock lay dying, and there was evidently on her mind a load of which she could not be persuaded to unburden herself. The Vicar, yearning to confess and absolve her, lost no opportunity of pressing the poor thing to tell him her trouble, which she promised one day to do on the following morning, when, as the Vicar said, the house would be quiet, and there would be no hindrance to her confession. The dear young man appeared by her bedside that day clad in his ecclesiastical garments of surplice and cassock, and after preliminary prayer he approached the momentous subject. It was the first time that he had ever succeeded in bringing one of his new parishioners up to this point.

"Yes, sir," said Mrs. Giles very feebly, "I've had summat on my mind ever since I know'd I was goin', an' now I'll tell 'ee what 'tis. Jack's all right, but Harry's top-coat won't last the winter."

This good young man comes from a London parish, and he does not yet know our Wessex

people. They have the religious instinct to a very remarkable degree, but they can endure no human interference between the soul and its Creator. This stern individualism is a remnant of Puritanism.

Their religion is peculiar, and varies with the circumstances of life; the tenets are few but marked. In early years quietness is the chief characteristic of the virtuous person. It is the test by which he is judged. A quiet man is almost of necessity on the right road, unless he be an Irishman or a Roman Catholic, in which case salvation is hardly considered even a remote possibility for him. If the quiet man goes to a place of worship, the case is a clear one; if he goes to half a dozen, it is clearer still. He is on the right road. The rustic does not talk of being saved nowadays, except in bigoted circles; quietness is the essential for the young man who is credited with having "got religion," and it would be unreasonable to look for much more from him.

The next step comes about middle age, and may, for want of a better word, be termed Respectedness, or Dignification, as Isaac Walton would call it. The man respects himself more than he respects any other person of his acquaintance. He shows everybody he meets how fit it is that he should be respected. His behaviour under all circumstances is admirable. He takes in a newspaper and spells it out to his friends in the intervals of work. He accumulates piles of household goods, and is always a maximum subscriber to parochial clothing clubs. He attends all the village entertainments, provided the price of admission is not too low; he could not be seen in a penny seat without loss of



self-respect, but a sixpenny one will invariably find him. He is always in church on collection Sundays, well dressed, admirably conducted, attending with a detached reasonableness to the service. He is never emotional ; he has no "conviction of sin," such as his dissenting relatives suffer from ; he never talks about getting to heaven, nor even thinks about it. Personal dignification is his creed, and it carries him over many a rough journey, and makes the way smooth for him. No one would expect more of him than this admirable position.

But when he is old, or when, being not yet old, Death comes knocking for him, all is changed. Public opinion is satisfied that a man shall live with quietness and dignification for his religion, but it is not satisfied that he should die with them. He must find God on his deathbed. Every man and woman who comes to see him points out his duty in the matter. "You must think o' Heaven now, master, because you've got naught else to look to," is the invariable line of argument. And so, since he has always done his simple duty, he clasps his hands and says, "Angels!—Glory!" and dies as quietly as he lived, and everyone is happy about him, and says he makes a beautiful corpse.

I don't think that Petunia's good young vicar can appreciate this type of rustic. But it is a noble type, nevertheless, instinct with that proportion and form of self-control which alone is attainable by its subject. The higher flights of ecstasy and self-abnegation are not possible to him ; his carnal will is brought into subjection in a diverse way from that of his educated brother ; his ideal is a

different one, perhaps a lower one, but he does his best to live up to it. He has made a religion of his own, suited to his workaday life with its limitations and temptations, and through this religion, inadequate as we may be inclined to regard it, he finds himself enabled to—

“Move upward, working out the beast,  
And let the ape and tiger die.”

People are very fond of talking about the “good old days.” For my part, I confess myself no lauder of the acted time, and I don’t believe there ever were any good old days. The days when men were young seem good to them in retrospect, and that is probably the extent of it. In the country we read much in our daily newspapers, which come from London, about the agricultural depression, but the dweller in the wilderness is forced to admit that this depression is not visible to the naked eye. The occupier, at any rate, whether farmer or labourer, is as flourishing as he chooses to be, though the actual owner of the land is obliged to deny himself many luxuries that were formerly his. As he is in a minority, however, he gets but scant attention paid to his impoverished condition, and, taken as a whole, the days are better for the dweller on the land than they ever before have been. But there were certainly times when men in country places enjoyed life more boisterously than they do now. If we have anything to regret of the customs left behind us in past ages, it is the games, the sports, which gave life to the village green. Of these games not one exists here at the present day, and the sole



AGRICULTURAL DEPRESSION



link we have with pre-Reformation times is the Christmas play which is still enacted by our village mummers. It is preserved orally, and is passed on thus from generation to generation. I have taken it down from the lips of a member of an hereditary mumming family, and append it here as I heard it last night in our kitchen regions, and have heard it almost every Christmas-time through my life. It may be observed from internal evidence that the characters were formerly more numerous than they are in these degenerate days ; for the bold Turkish Knight, to accommodate himself to the shrunken number of the players, and perhaps also to suit the exigencies of the tale and the necessity for a recognition of British conquest everywhere, is rolled into one with the Bold Foreign King.

The peaceful winter night is disturbed by the sound of stealthy footsteps outside the drawing-room windows, and presently, led by a concertina, the preliminary chant breaks out—

“God bless the master of this house,  
I hope he is athin—  
An’ if he is praay tell us zo,  
An’ zoon we ’ool begin.

*Chorus*—With a hey dum dum,  
With a hey dum dum,  
With a hey dum dum de derry ;  
Vor we be come this Christmas-time  
A purpose to be merry.

“I hopes the missis is athin,  
A-zittin’ by the vire,  
A-pittin’ us poor mummers yer,  
Out in the dirty mire.

*Chorus*—With a hey dum dum, etc.

“ We doan’t come yer but wunst a year,  
 An’ hopes ’tis no offence ;  
 An’ if it is praay tell us zo,  
 An’ zoon we ’ool go hence.

*Chorus*—With a hey dum dum, etc.”

The invitation to enter is given, and the mummers go round to the kitchen, where presently the members of the family and the servants are gathered to witness the play. Each mummer enters singly in a conventional order, and each when he has come in proceeds to tramp round the room in a dizzy circle, excepting while the floor is occupied by the fight, when all except the combatants stand aside for a while.

#### THE MUMMERS’ PLAY.

*Excursions without, followed by a knock at the door. Enter*

FATHER CHRISTMAS, *attired in motley of chintz, from his high-crowned indefinite headgear depending fringes of coloured paper reaching nearly to the waist, and partly concealing his features.*

FATHER CHRISTMAS.

In comes I, wold Veyther Christmas,  
 Welcome or welcome not ;  
 I hopes wold Veyther Christmas  
 ’Ool never be forgot.

Christmas comes but wunst a year,  
 An’ when it comes it brings good cheer ;  
 Roast beef, plum pudding, strong beer, mince pie,  
 Who likes that any better’n little Happy Jack’n I ?

In this room there shall be shown  
 The girtest battle as ever was known,  
 Between King Jarge an’ the Turkish Knight,  
 Come over into old England vor to vight.

A room, a room ! I do assume  
 Vor my brave bwoys an’ soldiers too ;  
 An’ that’s the reason why I zay  
 Walk in, King Jarge, an’ clear thy way.



THE CHANT WITHOUT





*Enter KING GEORGE, attired in as near an approach as he dares don to a modern military uniform. His manner is blustering and aggressive.*

KING GEORGE.

In comes I, King Jarge,  
That man of kerrage bold ;  
With my broad sword in my hand  
I won ten thousand pounds in gold.

'Twas I that fought the fiery dragon,  
An' brought en to the slaughter ;

'Twas I that won  
The King of Egypt's daughter.

With my manhood zo brave,  
An' my vallet zo true,  
I've conquered armies an' nations, an' still I say,  
I'll fight wi' any fightin' man as comes athin my way.

FATHER CHRISTMAS. Walk in, thou Foreign King.

*Enter THE FOREIGN KING, dressed somewhat like FATHER CHRISTMAS—as are nearly all the following characters—but with a black face. His manner is as blatant as King George's until his defeat at the champion's hands, when he cringes in proper form, as England's enemies should everywhere do.*

THE FOREIGN KING.

In comes I, the bold Foreign King,  
Wi' my broad sword in my hand  
I'll quickly make it swing.  
Likewise I am the bold Turkish Knight,  
Just come into old England vor to fight.  
Let King Jarge—that man of kerrage bold—  
Draw his sword ;  
If his blood be hot  
I'll quickly make it cold.

KING GEORGE.

Hold, thou Turkish Knight !  
Thou talkest very bold ;  
But draw thy sword an' vight,  
Or draw thy purse an' pay ;  
Vor satisfaction I 'ool have  
Avore thou goest away.

THE FOREIGN KING. Zatisfaction, King Jarge? There is no zatisfaction at all;  
 Vor thee an' I 'ool battle to zee which of us on the vloer shall  
 virst vall. [*A terrible fight ensues, and THE FOREIGN KING  
 falls on one knee.*]



“THEE AN' I 'OOL BATTLE”

THE FOREIGN KING.

Pardon me, pardon me, O King, I crave!  
 Pardon me, King Jarge, an' vor ever 'ool I be thy slave.  
 [KING GEORGE *pardons him, and they fight again.*  
 THE FOREIGN KING *is killed.*]

FATHER CHRISTMAS.

Oh, King! oh, King! what hast thou done?  
 Thou hast ruined me by killin' my only zon!

KING GEORGE. Nay, Father, 'twas thy zon as gave me the virst challenge.

FATHER CHRISTMAS. Is there a doctor to be vound  
To cure this man as lies bleedin' an' wounded on the ground?



“MY NAME IS MISTER GRAY”

KING GEORGE. Yes, there is a doctor to be vound  
To cure this man lyin' bleedin' an' wounded on the ground.

FATHER CHRISTMAS. Who is he?

KING GEORGE. Peter Gray.

FATHER CHRISTMAS. Walk in, Peter Gray.

*Enter* PETER GRAY.

PETER GRAY. Who are you a-callin' Peter Gray?  
 My name is not Peter Gray,  
 • My name is Mister Gray—  
 Zo the people all zay.

FATHER CHRISTMAS. Oh, doctor, doctor, what is thy fee?

PETER GRAY. Ten guineas is my fee,  
 But fifty guineas I'll take of thee.

FATHER CHRISTMAS. Take it all, doctor, but what canst thou cure?

PETER GRAY.

I can cure the itch, the stitch, the palsy, an' the gout,  
 All pains athin an' all pains athout,  
 An' if this man hev got a bush in's toe I can pull en out.

Yes, I am a noble little doctor; I am not one of them deceitful quack doctors as walks from place to place a-zayin' what they can do. What I doos I doos before you all; 'tis hard if you cain't believe your own eyes. I've got a bottle here called the Foster Drops. I'll put one drop on the tip of his tongue, an' one drop on the palm of his hand, an' will zay to en, Arise! arise! an' walk as quickly as thou canst!

KING GEORGE (*menacingly*). Arise! arise, an' get thee back to thine own country, an' tell them that King Jarge can vight ten thousand better men than thee. [THE FOREIGN KING *rises*. *All begin again to tramp in a circle round the room.*]

FATHER CHRISTMAS. Walk in, Tall-an'-Smart.

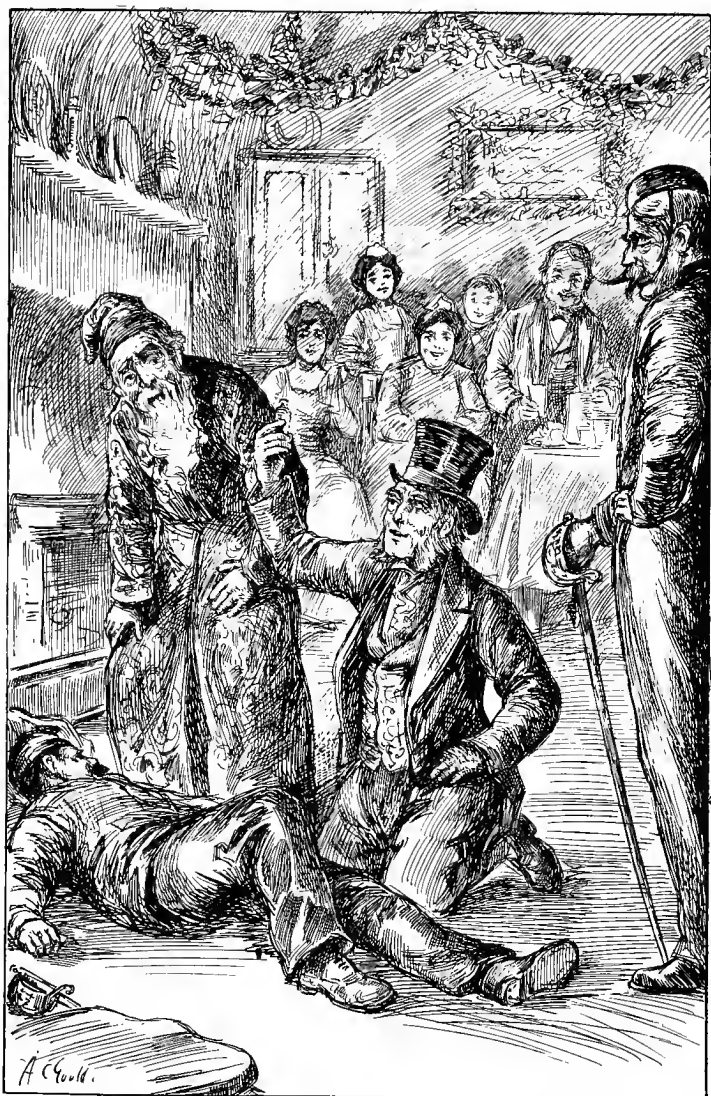
*Enter* TALL-AND-SMART.

TALL-AND-SMART.

In comes I, bold Tall-an'-Smart,  
 I tells my mind wi' all my heart;  
 My head is made of iron,  
 My body's lined wi' steel,  
 My trousers fits my legs zo tight,  
 My garters drags my heel.

Virst comes Christmas, an' then comes spring—  
 I am a little jolly lad can either dance or zing.

FATHER CHRISTMAS. Walk in, bold Granny-dear.



"I'LL PUT ONE DROP ON THE TIP OF HIS TONGUE"



*Enter* THE BOLD GRENADIER.

THE BOLD GRENADIER.

In comes I, bold Granny-dear,  
Vor Tall-an'-Smart I do not veer ;  
If his head is made of iron,  
An' his body's lined wi' steel,  
Vrom his head to his shoulders  
I'll quickly make en veel.

FATHER CHRISTMAS. Walk in, Happy Jack.



HAPPY JACK

*Enter* HAPPY JACK, a flag-basket containing a large rag doll and several small ones slung over his back.

HAPPY JACK. In comes I, little Happy Jack,  
Wi' my wife an' vam'ly at my back,

My vam'ly large, though I be small,  
 Every little helps us all.  
 Out o' nine I've got but vive,  
 An' half o' they be starved alive :  
 A cup o' Christmas ale will make us dance an' zing,  
 But money in our pocket's a much better thing.  
 Ladies an' gentlemen a-zettin' at your ease,  
 Give us a Christmas-box, just what you please.

FATHER CHRISTMAS. Walk in, Mazzánt binnít.

*Enter* HIM-AS-AIN'T-BEEN-IN-YET.

HIM-AS-AIN'T-BEEN-IN-YET.

In walks I as an't bin 'it,  
 Wi' my girt head an' little wit,  
 My head zo big, my wit zo small—  
 I've brought my viddle to please 'ee all.  
 Green sleeves, yellow lace,  
 Come all you mummers, dance apace,  
 The viddler is in great distress  
 Vor want of a little money.

[*Polka, in which all take part.*]



## JANUARY

*Jan.* **T**HERE are few records more interesting,  
2. to my mind, than those dealing with the history of the place in which one lives.

The documentary history of this parish goes back very far, for we learn that a portion of it belonged to the monastery of Abingdon in the seventh century. Ceadwalla, the monkish King of Wessex, granted property here to the monastery in A.D. 686, and the grant was confirmed by Cenwulf, King of Mercia, in A.D. 821. Tradition tells of a temporary or a summer camp here in Roman days. The high ridge between two valleys was admirably suited to such a position for surveying purposes, commanding the country westward beyond Marlborough, and on the north and east almost as far. It is easy to weave a pretty story round a silver coin of the Republic, B.C. *circa* 217, which was dug up in a field just below the camp some thirty or forty years since. It is a coin common enough with collectors, but is the only one of its kind ever found in England, and it is probable that it was brought over by a Roman soldier during the Occupation as a keepsake, and lost by him in the meadow where it was so many centuries later found. There may have been much wailing and heart-

searching in consequence, and I should like to know what the Roman maiden said when her swain turned up on Tiber's banks without her gage of love.

The parish consists of six small villages, with a total population in these days of about eight hundred souls. Various Saxon charters are extant which deal with lands in the parish, and in *Domesday* it is recorded that a principal owner of property was a certain Editha, who may possibly have been the widow of Edward the Confessor. She appears to have had power to deal with the place as she chose, for the book in its quaint phraseology tells us that "Editha herself might go where she pleased," or, in other words, that she had the privilege of alienating the property if she should desire to do so.

Until the year 1226 that portion of the parish which lies about the River Kennet was included within the confines of Windsor Forest, although it lay at least forty miles from the royal domain. It was disafforested in the year mentioned, but it is evident that the King was still liable to come hunting here, for in 1284 William Lovell held two carucates of land by the sergeanty of keeping a kennel of hounds at the King's cost. There is still a lonely cot called King's Barn in the part of the parish in which William Lovell's manor lay, but I doubt if its name has been handed down from the thirteenth century. Local tradition asserts that it was the abode of a certain Daddy King, who died a violent death, and still haunts the lane near King's Barn. He wandered when in his cups into a shallow dip-hole on the hillside, and falling on

his face, was suffocated there. He is said to have been a very small man, and the last person who saw his wraith, about half a century since, could bring as sole evidence his belief that the shade which appeared to him was "about the height of a donkey." But this testimony has always been considered quite conclusive, for was not Daddy King locally reported to have been an abnormally small man?

William Lovell's manor was a portion of that property which belonged nearly a hundred years after his time to William Danvers, who in 1353 alienated his possessions to King Edward III., with a *proviso* that the King should direct masses to be said for William Danvers' soul at the Royal Chapel of Windsor for ever. I fear this pious arrangement has lapsed, and that the only eventual gainers by the proceeding were the Royal Family, for the King promptly made a provision—or part of a provision—for his daughter Isabella out of the property in question, as recorded in a Pipe Roll of 1360. Queen Katherine of Aragon came in for the estate at a later date, and so, after her, did Lady Jane Seymour—Queen Joan of England, as she is called by the chroniclers.

A knight's fee in the parish was held early in the fifteenth century by a certain Richard Abberbury, a near relative—probably a son—of Sir Richard Abberbury, the guardian during his minority of King Richard II. Richard Abberbury the younger had married, about 1382, Alice, widow of Edmund Danvers of Chilton, and a few years later appears to have been living at Donnington, some four miles

from this parish, a fine property which he sold in 1415 to Thomas Chaucer, who is supposed to have been a son of the poet, Geoffrey Chaucer. To this Richard Abberbury, John of Gaunt, in 1397, bequeathed a legacy of fifty marks, and a helmet which is said to have belonged to him is now in the Tower of London.

When Henry VIII. dissolved the monasteries the Abbot of Abingdon was one of the first to yield to his Sovereign's command, and to give up the Church property in his keeping. Henry accordingly became possessed of a more considerable property in this parish. In 1561 Queen Elizabeth granted the land which had been formerly parcel of the monastery's possessions, and which her "dearest father" had leased to Sir Thomas Parry, Kt. (Councillor and Treasurer of the Royal Household), to this Sir Thomas's son Thomas, who was himself also knighted at some subsequent date, and appointed Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Sheriff of Berks, and Ambassador to France. He was buried in Westminster Abbey in 1616. Sir Thomas got into pecuniary difficulties before he died, and in 1590 sold the reversion of his lands, after his wife's and his own demises, to his brother-in-law, Sir Thomas Knyvett, of Ashwellthorpe, Norfolk. In Chancery Bills and Answers, 1616, there is a piteous appeal for a provision from Sir Thomas's natural son, Samuel Parry, who seems to have been a considerable loser by his father's death:—

"Whereas the said Sir Thomas Parry did keepe your Orator with all needful allowances of habitation, meate,

drinke, and expenses, and did direct the course of your said Orator his life, that albeit he being bred in Litterature and very good fassion by the said Sir Thomas his direction, did not apply himself to any profession, but Sir Thomas Parry said your Orator shold depend upon the honorable care of him the said Sir Thomas, your Orator having taken to wife a gentlewoman of good birth hath by her Tenn children."

He pleads for a promised provision of £40 per annum out of the estates, but I have not succeeded in finding any record to prove whether he got it or no.

Sir Thomas Knyvett never came into actual possession of the property, for he, also falling into debt, assigned his reversion for a good round sum to a wealthy citizen and Lord Mayor of London named Sir Francis Jones, of whom the present lord of the manor is the representative.

There was probably a church here from a very early date. The parish church until fifty years ago had for its north wall a portion of the old Norman masonry, and when this wall was taken down remnants of an older foundation and indications of burials beneath showed that there had been an earlier edifice on or near the spot. The tower of the chapel of ease exhibits to this day the veritable work of Saxon builders, and until comparatively recently the sole means of entrance to it was by a doorway high up in the wall of the tower. A platform to support a beacon fire formed the topmost storey. The churchyard lies around the parish church, and I have calculated that at least twenty thousand bodies rest in that one small acre of ground.

The Parish Registers are interesting reading for the genealogist, and are practically continuous from the year 1559, though entries are sparse during the Protectorate. The official transcribers, when copying from the old paper books into the parchment volumes ordered for use from 1603 onward, have omitted many details which they considered trivial, such as burials in woollen and the like, and the Registers are therefore robbed of interest in this respect. But as a collection of names they are very valuable. Perhaps one of the most curious entries is that of a comparatively recent marriage, of which the following is an abstract :—

“Richard Habgood of this Parish, Batchelor, and Hannah Eyles of the Parish of Speen, Widow, were married in this Church by Licence this Sixteenth Day of November in the Year One Thousand Seven Hundred and Seventy two, by me T. Shirley, Rector.”

In the margin, in Mr. Shirley's handwriting, are the words “H. Snell,” which in the abstract of the marriage register are expanded into “Han. Snell, Soldier.”

Hannah Snell was a famous adventuress who was born at Worcester in the year 1723. In 1744 she married a Dutch sailor named James Summs, but owing to his evil conduct and desertion, she was forced to seek her own living, and in the following year, under a sufficient disguise, she enlisted as a soldier in a regiment quartered at Carlisle. Not liking her companions, however, she deserted, and took service at Portsmouth as a marine, in which capacity she seems to have served for five years without any discovery of her sex.

She obtained pensions from both services, and in 1759 married a man named Eyles; her third husband, whose existence is not, so far as I can judge, known to historians, being the Richard Habgood recorded in our Registers. It is probable that she survived him, as she died in 1792 an inmate of Chelsea Hospital, where she was buried.

*Jan. 20.* January is, or should be, the month of flowers. There are few of the best winter-blooming plants that cannot be had now in perfection, though, strangely enough, it is the time of greatest leanness in most greenhouses. The fault lies with the amateur who crowds his house with things that bloom when flowers under glass are not valuable. Something is due also to that mistaken economy which prevents the small amount of expenditure necessary for a January show—mistaken, because the joy of coming into one's sitting-rooms from a walk or drive in snow and sleet and general discomfort, and finding them crammed with yellow daffodils, is one hardly to be matched among life's simpler pleasures.

January is the time of fruition after the labours of three previous seasons. It is also a period of partial idleness, for though much planning may then be done, actual work, except that of the moment, is almost at a standstill. There are few seeds to be sown, little propagating except of chrysanthemums is advisable, and planting in general is at a standstill. Enjoyment without labour and without anxiety is so seldom within the grasp of the mortal that so good an opportunity for it should not be lightly flung aside.

But if the time is one of fruition it is also one of criticism, of weeding, of ruthless sitting in judgment. Worthless varieties of bulbs have betrayed themselves, and a bad mark must be placed against their names. Plants which need more heat than the greenhouse can supply must be got rid of. Others which blossom late must be noted, that due consideration may be given to the proportion of their value for winter use. A plant, for instance, which flowers in March is worth perhaps a tenth part of one which flowers in January. Unless the greenhouse space is practically unlimited, the former should make way for the latter kind of plant; but it is easy enough, I find, to give oneself good advice, and difficult indeed to accept and to act upon it. Every winter I record a vow that I will never again grow this or that variety of bulb, and every summer the temptation of the growers' catalogues proves too strong for me. Here and now, for instance, I have three different kinds of yellow tulip in bloom; they are *Chrysolora*, yellow *Pottebakker*, and *Mon Trésor*, and there is no comparison between them in point of value. The first comes a little smaller than the others, but in the amateur's hands it is infinitely superior to them in shape, texture, and habit. In these pages I register a new resolve, which is the old—that I will grow for the future no single yellow tulip under glass except *Chrysolora*, which is less subject to vicissitude and to the ravages of fly than any other, and generously gives me its best even in circumstances which the tulip as a species dislikes so intensely as those attending its forcing.



Glorious are the daffodils now in flower in my little greenhouse. I have tried the new *poeticus poetarum* this year, and though it has been a sad failure it has shown me what a beautiful thing it would be in happier times. It has a very delicate perianth with a gorgeous stained cup, and I hope to obtain some success with it out of doors if not under glass.

But if there is a failure or two there are many successes, for I do not think that any other daffodils have cheated me of a flower. The ordinary *poeticus ornatus* is perfect, and is now in full bloom, together with a dozen or more other varieties. Here is a list of them :—

- Narcissus*, double Roman.
- N.* Paper White.
- N. Poeticus ornatus*.
- N. Incomparabilis*.
- N.* „ Bacon and Eggs.
- N. Obvallaris*.
- N. Spurius*.
- N. Cynosure*.
- N. Figaro*.
- N. Stella*.
- N. Barrii conspicuus*.
- N. Princeps*.
- N. Horsfieldii*.
- N. Rugulosus*.
- N.* Golden Spur.

Of other bulbs there are blue and maize-coloured Italian hyacinths, grape hyacinths, including two beautiful new varieties, called respectively *azureum* and Heavenly Blue; scillas, snowdrops, freesias, and sweet jonquils. Various tulips there are also, though some experimental kinds must be acknowledged

relative failures; La Reine, however, is never a failure, and it is very fine this winter. There are other minor bulbs, all of which are pretty and some well worth growing, while others take up more room than one is justified in giving them. Of these last are the small hoop-petticoat narcissi, various snow-flakes and varieties of squills. But everyone should grow the white dog's-tooth violet—*erythronium citrinum* is its catalogued name. The leaves are handsome, faintly spotted with brown, and they stand up boldly round the flower stem, which bears two or more blossoms, creamy in colour with a yellow-stained centre. Several bulbs in a five-inch pot make a good show, and few things are prettier than their graceful flowers, in shape and size somewhat resembling those of the *clematis montana*.

Lilies of the valley are so often a failure that a few words must be said about their culture. I have tried more than one way of forcing them, but in none have I been successful except in that which provides a great heat for them. Lilies come from the salesmen early in November. If the weather at the time is frosty, the crowns may be laid in an exposed position on the grass for a night or two, as a few degrees of cold helps them to blossom. As soon as they have had their baptism of frost, they may be potted up loosely in five-inch pots, as many crowns being put in as the pots will hold without squeezing. The tips of the crowns should stand up above the surface of the soil, and should be covered over with a good handful of moss or cocoa fibre, and an inverted pot placed over each pot of bulbs. They should then be plunged in a bottom tempera-

ture of 80° to 90°, and the covering fibre must be syringed several times a day to keep the tops moist. If the temperature is lower than I have indicated, the leaves will probably not appear until the blossoms are over, but by forcing in a steadily high temperature both will come together. Most persons will object that they cannot command so high a temperature in an ordinary greenhouse. I used to think so myself until I came to make experiments. Pots on an open stage, standing high above the stove, will probably not find themselves in anything warmer than, perhaps, 50°, but a good plunge set closely over the stove and kept thoroughly moist will often run the thermometer up to 90° immediately above the greatest point of warmth.

It is of no use, however, to attempt to force lilies in this temperature unless means can be taken to prevent their becoming dry. The roots as well as the tops must be kept moist by a constant application of the watering-pot and the syringe respectively. When the crowns have started about a couple of inches, light can be gradually admitted, until eventually full exposure is permissible.

I have been planting a new bed of lilies of the valley in the open this winter, after two previous failures on the same piece of ground. It is odd that very often this flower will not thrive in spots which appear in every respect suited to it. The aspect may be right, the soil perfect, the drainage adequate, and yet the result may be unmitigated failure. Three years ago I planted several hundreds of crowns in an apparently suitable spot, and gave them the liquid manure which they love as

frequently as they were likely to require it ; for lilies do not care for a heavy dressing of stable stuff in the winter. The tips of their crowns should be always exposed to light and air, for they love to see the world all the year round, so that nourishment should be administered in liquid form. Having thus provided carefully for their wants—the more carefully because they were a costly new variety—I watched them dwindling away to nothingness through three seasons. The first spring there was a wealth of leaves ; the second there were comparatively few ; the third I succeeded in counting twelve sprays, and never a flower worthy of the name throughout the whole of that time. I am willing to ascribe the failure to the fact that the variety was, as I have said, a new one, that known as Fortin's, so I have lately made a fresh plantation with the old common sort, and hope for better results with it. “There's a deal of deception in ahdvertysements,” as poor old Mr. Tyler used to say, and I cannot deny that in the matter of garden stuff I have been befooled by them many a time and oft.

*Jan. 22.* A snap of cold weather has made me anxious for my standard roses, and I have tied wisps of bracken among their heads. The bush plants do not require this care, as they are carefully earthed up and well mulched, so that even if the branches die back fresh shoots will spring from the crowns. This hard weather has put a stop to the indefatigable outdoor labours of Sterculus, who is a miserable man in consequence. With so little glass as we possess his industrious soul is harassed by enforced idleness, though he tries hard to make

work enough in the greenhouse to support his ardent spirit. He is almost as fond of potting-soils as of manure, and has laid in an enormous stock of these, which he is now turning over and preparing for spring use. We cut turves from a sound pasture every year, and lay them by, stacked in ridges, to mature. In autumn oak and beech leaves are collected, and penned in a hurdle enclosure, for the same purpose. When both have reached the proper condition, which is in not less time than a year, Sterculus enjoys himself, as he is doing to-day, by amalgamating them. Two parts of the turf mould, two of the leaf mould, one of material from a spent hotbed, and one of sharp, white sand make sustenance "fit for a king," as he says. The garden boy is kept busy collecting moss from the nearest wood, and pounding up old pots to the proper size for drainage; labels are being cleaned and painted, and everything got into order for the day when they will be required.

How irritating it is to have an unmitigated failure! Fond as I am of giving myself good advice I frequently find myself doing all kinds of deceitful things to persuade myself that I need not take it. I have often seen the beautiful Bermuda buttercup growing and flowering bravely in a friend's greenhouse in January, and while admiring I have said severely to myself, "You will be extremely foolish if you spend money on any of those bulbs, for you know perfectly well that your greenhouse is not warm enough for them." Last year when looking over my catalogue I marked the *Oxalis Bermudiana*, at the same time assuring my-

self that my notes did not mean anything, for I begin by marking all the plants I should *like* to have, and then winnow them down to the things that I *must* have. But when the time came for sending my list to the salesman in August, I found myself in a great hurry, and tried to think that I had no time to look through it and correct it. "Of course," said the tempter, "there are one or two things that you may have left in error, but time is valuable; there is so much to be done. Better leave the list as it is. There cannot be more than one or two things that you did not mean to order." One or two! They have seemed like a hundred when I found them taking up room that would have been better given to other plants. This buttercup, for instance, seems to fill a shelf itself, though there are only two pots of it; but they are large nine-inch pots, and each contains a dozen tubers. The foliage is beautiful, the colour of the flowers perfect, but alas! they never leave the bud stage, because my greenhouse is not warm enough for them. In March they will have a second period of flowering, and will be a gorgeous mass of colour, but I shall have outdoor things by that time, and these will have lost some of their value in consequence.

The violets have flowered well, but their stems are getting short, so the soil round those in frames has been stirred, and some good old manure pricked in among them. When the cold snap is over and they yield their blooms again, they will be greatly improved in consequence of this attention. Chinese pæonies also have been heavily top dressed with

stable stuff and charred refuse ; they have now been planted for four years, and have made splendid clumps. The flowering of a pæony depends entirely upon the strength of the stool, and there is no plant in the garden which benefits by top dressing more than this.

I have looked through all the chrysanthemum plants which have been turned into the frames as they went out of bloom, and have kept back two of each variety from which to propagate, consigning all the rest to the rubbish heap. We keep these stools as cool as possible, and it must be a hard winter that entails their being left in the greenhouse for propagating, our frames being well protected except from severe and long-continued cold. The colder the young plants are kept, short of actual frost, the better they will be, and I can only recollect one winter when I lost them from frost-bite ; the following autumn the results were not appreciably less, for cuttings taken in February and March, if the early ones fail, prove quite as satisfactory in the end to the amateur who does not go in for showing. We are striking about four cuttings round the sides of four-inch pots ; and as soon as the plants show signs of growth they will be separately potted in three-inch size, and given a shift as often as they require it until their final move in June. Seeds are being sown of various late-blooming things, such as snapdragons, tobacco plants, dianthuses, and other flowers which may be wanted in the summer to fill gaps in the borders and carry the blossoming season into the autumn months. I have succeeded

in persuading myself that an herbaceous garden, once planted, gives the maximum of good results with the minimum of labour; but there is no denying that a few packets of annuals judiciously sown in the borders in April, and a few clumps of late things worked in among the early-flowering plants in June, are needed to ensure a succession throughout the summer. At the same time these ought to be such as would be naturally expected in an herbaceous border. I found myself once at a garden-party given by a millionaire on the other side of the county, and everyone was saying, "*Have you seen the herbaceous border?* Be sure not to miss the herbaceous border." In the course of wanderings between alleys of chopped glass and brick and beds of calceolarias and pelargoniums, in the search for something that really seemed to live a natural life, I came suddenly upon the herbaceous border. But what a border! To be sure it was a blaze of colour, such as, in unregenerate moments, the keen gardener is apt to dream of as ideal. But the first feeling of surprise became in a moment a shock of pain, for the whole thing was a cry of inharmonious distress. The perennial things, phloxes, delphiniums, and the like were of the best and the most expensive, but there was not a plant visible that had gone out of bloom, or any that might be expected to come into bloom later, for the whole display was carefully arranged for the one month that his lordship chose to inhabit this particular house. There was a back row of dahlias and other tall things mixed with the phloxes, a middle row of cannas, tobaccos, zinnias, and



a hundred others jostling the honest snapdragons and hybrid pentstemons, and in the front there blazed petunias, pelargoniums, stocks, marigolds, and countless more varieties of tender things crowding the pansies and the campanulas and the funkias to their undeserved extinction. In the whole there was no repose, no nature, no suggestion of past beauty or coming glow which makes the herbaceous garden in its natural state a real companion, with its promise of life and its threat of death as real as any of our own, and as sad or as happy. I do not want that sort of perennial border, but I am obliged to confess that a little judicious supplement in late spring and early summer with harmonious additions is necessary for the after-appearance of the garden picture.

*Jan. 25.* I have just sent off to a friend in town a glorious box of flowers which might rejoice the heart of a misanthrope. It was one of those large dressmaker's boxes in which they send home gowns, and one feels no small degree of pride in the power to fill so considerable a receptacle at this time of year. "Very good for little people," says Sterculus, hugging himself with natural pride, as he sees the basketful of blooms of which the greenhouse is reft to do him honour in the metropolis, as he thinks. I find there is only one way of packing flowers to ensure their arriving in a perfectly fresh condition. They are cut several hours before they are wanted, or perhaps even overnight, and placed in large bowls of water, so that they may absorb all they can before the journey. Then the stems are dried, and each variety is tied up in a good-sized

bunch with bast or soft worsted, and finally every bunch is closely stitched down with the yarn to the bottom and top and sides of the box. They touch each other, but do not overlap, and being firmly fixed and sufficiently moist to keep the life in them for a good many hours, they reach town as fresh as they left the country.

Yesterday I saw the best arrangement of dried flowers which I have ever beheld, and yet it was done with only three varieties, and those quite common and easy to grow, the whole secret being in its bold arrangement. The large jar which held them was of plain red earthen material, and standing wide rather than high in it were large bunches of cherry lanterns and honesty, each grouped boldly with no suspicion of spottiness, and both connected and softened by sprays of statice mingled throughout. It had been done by a keen lover of flowers, and the result was perfectly good.

I went down to dinner last night with a newly-local young gentleman who bored me almost to death by talking for an hour or more about shootin' and huntin'. About the time of dessert, however, when he had finished his say and began to cast about in his mind for a topic likely to interest me in return for my kindness in listening to him, he embarked upon the subjects of ethnic distribution and local history, and the following dialogue took place:—

“Interestin' part of the country this, ain't it?”

“Very interesting; but why this part of the country specially?”

“Oh, because hist'ry began here, don'tcherknow; early colonists and that sorterthing.”

"Oh, I didn't know."

"What! not about King Alfred? He was the first man that settled in England and took possession of these parts, don'tchersee? There wasn't anybody here till he came, and it's so jolly to feel that we live in the oldest inhabited part of the country. Gives you a kinder feelin' that you've come to the right place, don'tcherknow."

And until we left the dining-room he was kind



"INTERESTIN' PART OF THE COUNTRY THIS"

enough to instruct me at large upon this interesting topic, and I am free to admit that I enjoyed myself thoroughly.

*Jan. 31.* I have just had a letter from Petunia announcing her engagement to Mr. Thomas Spencer Moreville, of Redlands Park, Surbiton, and Ardenbraughtantinnny, Inverness-shire. I am delighted that she is happy, but I cannot help feeling sorry for poor Mr. Mumby, who, as I have now begun to believe, has been shockingly treated.

## FEBRUARY

*Feb.* **S**TERCULUS has gone off early this morning to pay a visit to his sick sister, who lives a dozen miles or more away across the North Downs. He dislikes holidays so much on principle that it is always a surprise when he consents to take one. I have the garden all to myself, and have raided the greenhouse and cast out into the void several worthless plants which no appeal could prevail upon him to sacrifice. I shall have a bad ten minutes to-morrow morning, but in the meantime the night's frost will have set a seal upon my decision and made the reinstatement of his favourites impossible.

It makes one happy even to think of double rockets! They are among the most valuable of flowers for scent and pleasant association, for they are real old English things, I am convinced, though the horticultural books assign them to Southern Europe and Asia. If Shakespeare did not know and love them I am sorry for him. But I am sure that there was a large patch of them in the garden at New Place—rockets must always be grown in large patches—and that he walked among them and enjoyed their fragrance on many a morning of May

and June. They are always associated in my mind with Stratford-on-Avon, because the only week I have spent there was made glorious by an enormous bunch of them given me by a friendly market-gardener. It was my first acquaintance with the flower, and the remembrance of my huge posy is the only really happy one which I can conjure up in connection with the great poet's birth-place, because no one who loves him should on any account be persuaded to visit Stratford-on-Avon.

There are, of course, rockets and rockets. The tall single ones are those most generally known, and sometimes one sees whole borders invaded by them, so easily do they propagate themselves by scattering their seed far and wide around them. These single kinds, however, are only fit for the wild garden. But the double rocket is worthy of the best place, and probably it would be more grown than it is if it was not rather troublesome to keep in stock.

February is as good a month as any for the planting of rockets, though this may be done in the autumn with equally favourable results. The point to bear in mind is that at some period of its yearly growth root-division must be resorted to, for if left to itself the plant dies out and disappears. In consequence of this demand it has been condemned as only half hardy, whereas it is in truth one of the hardiest things in the garden. In some of the coldest parts of Scotland it flourishes amazingly, and it will flourish equally well wherever its idiosyncrasy is recognised and provided for.

When the plant has done flowering many root-buds push into growth, and at the time of propagation it is necessary to divide these portions as freely as possible, including with each a part of the old root. They may be replanted on the same spot, each division a few inches from its neighbour, in well-manured soil; and it is necessary to bear in mind that these things should not be spotted about a border, but should have a certain amount of ground given over solely to themselves. It may not be more than a square yard that can be spared, but however little may be appropriated to them, it should be given ungrudgingly, because they will well repay the consideration.

In some soils the double rocket will stand for two years without requiring division, but in this circumstance it is well in the summer to stop the sprays by overhead cutting back, so as to induce young growth from the main stem. This may also be done if division of the roots is contemplated. As the caterpillar is fond of this plant, a look-out should be kept for it on the young foliage, where it loves to seek out the heart, and to weaken and perhaps destroy the very point of growth. The best kind of double rocket to grow is the old dwarf white variety, with rather small, compact flowers.

Other things rarely seen in gardens are the new forms of snowdrop. I suppose it is because the old kind is so common, and consequently new bulbs are seldom wanted, that the rarer ones are infrequently seen amongst us. Yet the ordinary *Galanthus nivalis* is much inferior to these newer

varieties, of which those of Elwes and Foster rank deservedly high. I have only tried *Galanthus Elwesii* myself, and I find it quite satisfactory, although it is planted in ground heavier than this form is said to thrive in, for it likes a light soil, and if peat can be added it is very happy indeed. My Elwes bulbs are flowering well now, though the old kind is not yet in bloom, and with them are studding the grass many yellow winter aconites, the first harbingers of spring. Horticultural manuals tell us to plant the winter aconite in good heavy soil, but experience teaches that the horticulturist may sometimes nod, for my bulbs, which are planted in good old loamy ground, are never robust or free in their flowering, while those of a neighbour which are grown beneath the eaves of the house in dry poor soil have flowers double the size of mine, and long stems which make them unusually good for cutting—a quality rarely present in the winter aconite.

There is as yet little that can be done out of doors, for the danger of winter's treachery is not yet over, and it behoves the gardener to be wary in his doings. This is a good time, however, to look through the rose trees, and to remove all wiry, twiggy wood, if it has not hitherto been done. In the case of standards this is, in my opinion, almost all the pruning that need be effected, but it is very important; good roses will not grow on thin, wiry wood, and the more that is cut out the better will be the result. But it is not only poor wood that must be got rid of, but also superfluous wood, to let in air and light to the heart of the tree;

Baroness Rothschild and her sports, for instance, yield comparatively little thin growth, yet they need the knife as much as many others, because they grow so much wood at the heart.

A good hedge of sweet peas has just been drilled, to come on in succession to those sown in November. They were of mixed sorts, while these are all of mauve, and lilac, and purple shades, each in its own patch, with some good white kinds interspersed. The next sowing will be in April, when a hedge of pinks and reds will be grown for late cutting, as well as another of mixed varieties.

I should like to re-plant the carnations which were not sufficiently well rooted to be taken last autumn from their parent stems, but the weather is threatening, and winter seems likely to come back again; so these must wait till we are more assured of fair skies and genial winds, for the end of the month will not be too late for this purpose. And in the meantime I fear we shall have to resign the hope of spring's coming, whose promise has been in the air for a fortnight or more, and to get back to greenhouse work, for the thermometer has fallen twenty degrees since yesterday, and there is every reason to fear a gale of snow and raging wind.

“Blow, blow, thou winter wind,  
Thou art not so unkind  
As man's ingratitude,”

for at the first taste of spring the gardener hastens to leave the sheltering greenhouse which has provided blossoms in abundance for several months, and to seek his treasure in the open, grudging every hour that has to be spent under a roof. Yet



the greenhouse is still gay with things of far greater beauty than could by dint of any effort be found outside it. Nearly all the flowers that made January bright are still growing there, and it is only that the natural impatience of the human finds it irksome to bestow labour on the old, well-known plants. Perhaps it is because the time of its greatest usefulness is drawing to an end, and when March comes in we shall depend for but few of our joys on its sheltering care. Even now seed-pans are jostling the growing pots, and the signs of the time of propagation which is beginning for the ensuing summer without, and for the following winter within doors, are everywhere visible to the eye. For February is the natural end of the year, being the time of the completion of winter's promise as well as that of the reiteration of summer's. Old things pass away, and all things become new.

But although the time is approaching when the greenhouse will hardly be a recognised factor in the providing of the bulk of our flowers, yet there are always wanted a certain number of pot plants for the house, or to furnish a cold greenhouse if one there is. The aim of the amateur, as I have constantly iterated, is or should be to provide for the summer season with things which do not take up much room in winter on the stages and shelves. From March to June the main supply for this purpose may be the show pelargonium; and from June to October begonias, achimenes, and gloxinias, which have been laid on their sides on the greenhouse floor for several months, together with various annuals suited to pot culture, which may now

be sown. The pelargoniums have been crowded unduly, yet not greatly to their hurt, first in cold frames, and later in a light part of the greenhouse ; but now they are given the best place, and are treated as honoured guests. They are separated out and regarded as individuals, and, if necessary, are repotted without disturbance of the ball, and presently buds will appear, the plants will expand generally, and good results will follow. One of mine which, last year, received this necessarily inadequate consideration in the early part of the winter became later as good a plant as ever I beheld, with nineteen large trusses adorning it, and the others were not far behind.

To associate with these in the spring there will be some belated primulas and zonal pelargoniums, with a Harris lily or two, so that I may consider the house provided for until the first days of summer, and now is the time to make provision for a succession. The tuberous begonias have to be looked over, and any which show signs of growth are knocked out of their soil and planted either in boxes or separately in three-inch pots, in either case to be repotted later. It is necessary to recollect that the top of the corm must not be buried. Moreover, nearly all begonias after their winter rest are hollow-crowned, and in watering care must be taken that this hollow is not filled with water, or the bulb will rot.

Achimenes and gloxinias may be started in succession to the begonias, but as they like rather more warmth, it is well, if the house is now kept cooler than in the early winter, to wait until the

garden hotbed is made up, and to bring them on with its aid.

*Feb. 3.* Sterculus did not come home last night, and this morning the whole village has been anxious about him. But about midday he stumbled with uncertain steps into his kitchen, where Mrs. Sterculus was recounting to me the various deaths she had



STERCULUS SANK INTO THE NEAREST CHAIR

heard of in the snows of past winters. He flung his hat on the table and sank into the nearest chair without a greeting to either of us.

“Lor’, what ails you?” cried Mrs. Sterculus, and at the question the poor man’s hair stood upright on his head, a phenomenon I have often heard of, but never before witnessed. We stayed him with

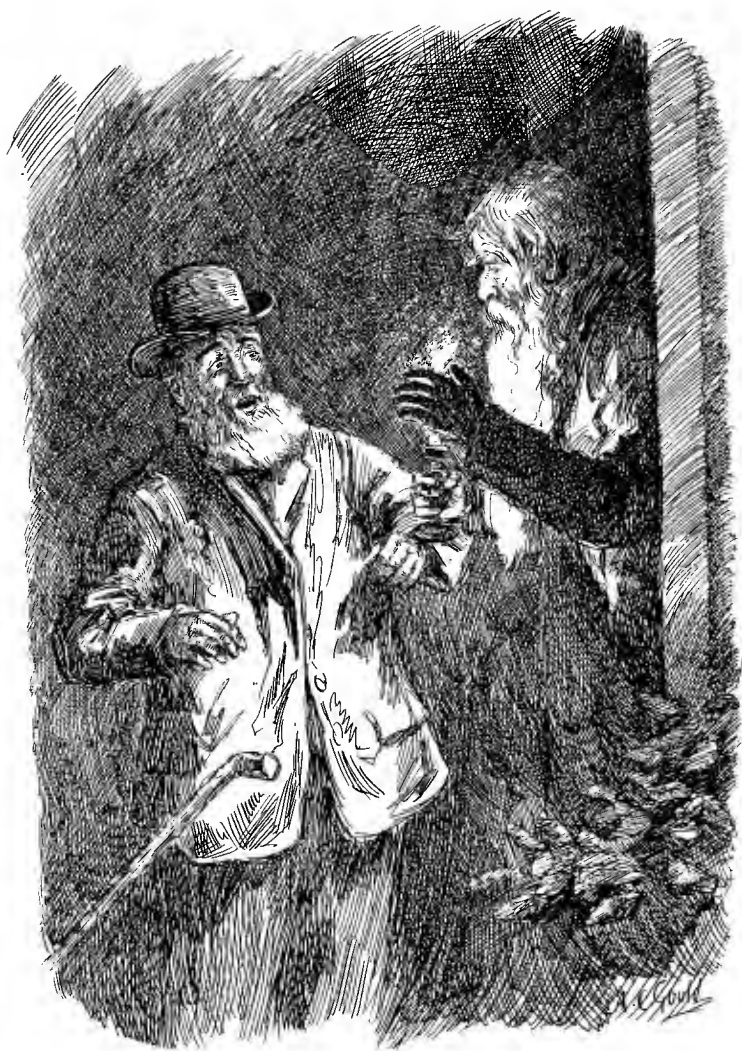
stimulants and comforted him with strong broth, and after a few hours' rest on the ancestral couch, which is the glory of his kitchen, he felt sufficiently restored to tell his tale. He has just been sitting on the edge of one of Jim's study chairs recounting the terrible experience of the night.

It appears that he left his sister's house about twilight yesterday for the long walk home, which lay first across a corner of the downs, and afterwards by more familiar roads along the valley. The snow, which had threatened for days, was falling thickly, and he had some difficulty in finding his way. When he had been walking for about two hours, and had not yet left the high ground, he knew that he had lost himself, so he pulled up suddenly, and then continued to walk onward because no other course was open to him. It would have been folly to go back, ignorant as he was of his whereabouts. But he began to feel nervous, for he is no braver in the dark than other Wessex men, and he goes in sore fear of the unknown.

He felt the ground before him with his stick at every step, for he knew there were treacherous hollows on these uplands into which he might fall and lie without discovery until the returning spring. His relief was great when he was brought up after a time by a fence, of which his blackthorn gave him warning. He followed the fence until its circumference was broken by a small wicket gate, through which he entered, and found himself walking up the narrow path of a cottage garden.

He knocked at the door of the cottage, but no one answered. Then he made snowballs, and





THE BOLTS WERE DRAWN BY AN AGED MAN

directed them at imaginary upper windows, and presently he rejoiced when he detected by the sound of broken glass that a missile had reached its goal. A light appeared through the curtain, and in answer to his shouting he heard feet clumping down the stairs. The bolts of the door were drawn by an aged man.

"Ask your pardon," said Sterculus.

The man only looked at him. He was a shock-headed creature with wild, bloodshot eyes, low of stature, and shaking with palsy. When he had satisfied his curiosity about his disturber he tried to shut the door again, but Sterculus had put his hob-nailed boot against it. The shock-headed man exploded in fits of cackling laughter, and shuffled upstairs with his candle, leaving Sterculus to enter or not as he would. It was a choice between a night in the open or the company of an imbecile, and he made the only decision possible. He stepped inside, bolted the door, lighted himself to the living-room with a match, and sat down in the elbow-chair by the fireside. There were a few live embers, and he drew them together and fell asleep over them, impelled by sheer exhaustion.

He awoke with a start, not knowing how long he had slept, and it was some moments before he realised his position. The hearth was black, but the room was illumined by a light not of earth—a light diffused dimly and equally through the kitchen. By his chair there stood a tall figure clad in garments such as his own grandfather had worn fifty years ago. The face was pale and stern, and

even in his terror Sterculus was aware that the form which stood over him was not a substantial one, for through and beyond it there shone the weird blue light of another world. He would have stood up like a man to any human intruder, but this ghostly visitor knocked him completely out of time, and he fell to his knees, crying—

“Oh, Mr. Ghost, don’t ’ee hurt I!”

His hair stood upright again on his head at the reminiscence, and he continued his story in trembling accents, and with that resort to the vernacular which distinguishes him when he is much agitated.

“‘Rise!’ says the ghost, ‘rise!’ a says, an’ I stood ’pright on my feet.

“‘Be you afeard on ma?’ a axed in a tarrifyin’ voice.

“‘No, sir,’ says I, but I ’lows my own voice he trembled a good un.

“‘Will you listen to my tale?’ a says.

“‘I’d liefer not, sir,’ says I.

“‘Why not?’ a bellocks fit to bring the house down.

“‘I dunno,’ says I, glutchin’ in ma throat an’ martly frowtened.

“‘Hark!’ says the ghost, wi’ a cold forefinger on my wrist. ‘By all you holds sacred hearken to ma. Do ’ee feel like as if ’ee was goin’ to swoon?’

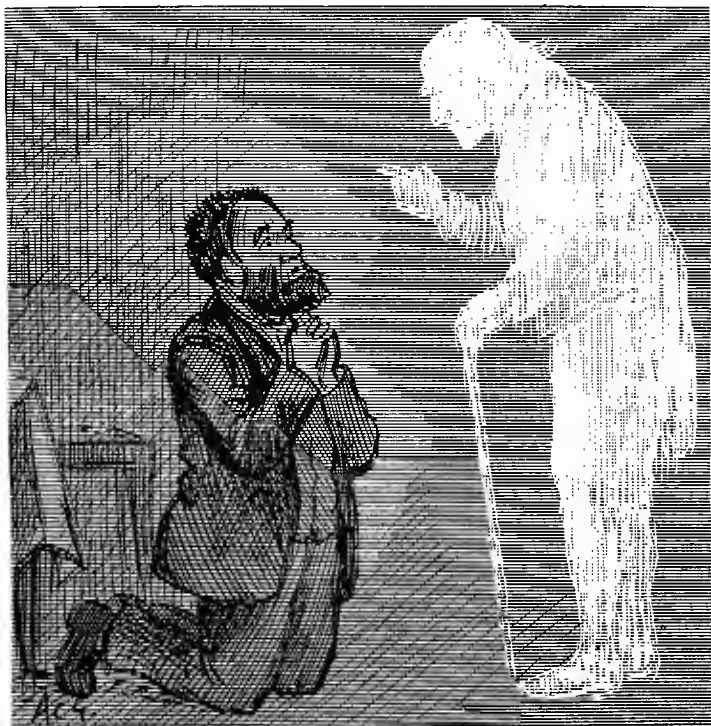
“‘No, Mr. Ghost,’ I says, ‘I wasn’t never one to swoon, not like my brother Meshach.’

“‘That is well,’ a says, ‘fer if you swoons I must disappear.’

“I wished then as I *was* a swoonder, but I knowed ’twas no good to try actin’ on’t wi’ a ghost, so I set



there a-hearkenin' to his scrooppittin' voice, wi' a gnawin' in my innards as made my heart quop like an old pump. You minds, ma'am, how our garden pump quops since he was froze laist winter?"



"OH, MR. GHOST, DON'T 'EE HURT I!"

I remember very well. Sterculus reminds me of its ailment about once a week, being desirous of a new one.

"Listen!" said the ghost. "For fifty years I have haunted this cottage, ever in the hope that I might compel someone to hearken to my story.

I lived here and died here, and I have appeared to every person who has lived in this house ; but they have been but two or three, and I could not make them understand. When that old man came, forty years ago, I rejoiced ; but, alas ! he was not only deaf, but foolish. In the one hour that I am nightly permitted to appear I touch him, and he opens his eyes and sees in the room my spirit light. He says, ‘ Darn that there moon ! ’ and turns on his side and sleeps again. But now you are here, and I can rid me of my secret. I am a robber and a murderer.”

“ Oh no, Mr. Ghost, don’t ’ee say that,” cried Sterculus.

“ Listen. There was a man of Oldborough who owned a flock of sheep. He came to Ilsley Fair across these downs, and sold them for a good price. Sheep were worth money in those days. He drank at half a dozen inns before he left the village. What wonder, then, that he lost his way on these downs, that he came hither to my house, that I saw his money while he slept his drunken sleep, and that I killed him ? Do you blame me for it ? ”

“ I d-dunno, sir,” mumbled Sterculus.

“ I got rid of the body, but I was afraid of the money. Look out of the window ; you will see a pile of stones on the ridge, and near it a thorn tree grows. Under that thorn the gold is buried. Cut down the tree, dig up the money, take it for yourself, and live like a gentleman. ‘ Live like a gentleman, an’ lie on a sofa fer the rest of your life,’ says he,” concluded Sterculus, “ an’ then a went. I

couldn't see the manner on't ; all I can swear to is that a went.

" I ups an' outs to the shed, an' got an axe an' a peck an' spade, fer the marnin' was breakin' by then. The snow'd disappeared like a merracle, an' the ground under the tree was all of a mash, so I knowed 'twas a real ghost as had made it ready fer ma. But first I had to cut down the thorn tree, an' I set to wi' a will, bein' amindted to get the money an' set out fer home. But when I laid the axe athurt the stem I knowed 'twas bewitched. It weren't a fellin' sound as that there axe made ; it rang like as if 'twas iron it was meetin'. Then I knowed that the ghost had been a-gammuttin' on ma, and that I shouldn't never see that gold. An' sure 'nough, wi'out a word o' warnin', he caught ma up, an' swep' ma back to the cottage an' in at winder, an' left ma belabourin' the kitchen kettle wi' the poker."

" But where was the axe ? " asked Jim, with a grave face.

" He'd a-changed it into a poker."

" But isn't it possible that you dreamt it all ? You woke up from a bad dream and found the poker in your hand."

" 'Twas worse'n that," said Sterculus ; " it weren't on'y that he'd 'chanted me an' the axe too ; he dood worse'n that."

" What did he do ? "

" There was a hole in the kettle's side, an' the water all a-runnin' on to the floor. It fair mammered ma. I knowed what I'd ha' done to arra man as treated *my* kettle like that ; an' I wouldn't stop to

face the old shacket upstairs as mightn't see 'twas a ghostie's doin'. I took an' run, an' I runned a'most till I got home. If Sarah wants to see ma again she must come yer ; I wouldn't go anighst that there cottage no more not fer all the sisters as ever was. Nor for all the missuses neether," he added, as an after-thought. But whether it was of Mrs. Sterculus that he was thinking or of myself, who for weeks had urged him to visit the bed-ridden Sarah, I have no means of judging.

I am certain only of one thing. So long as Sterculus lives he will believe that he saw a ghost in that lonely cottage, and he will bring as indisputable evidence the tale of the blue spirit light that shone in the kitchen, and the incident of the axe changed by enchantment into a poker. And these evidences will be sufficient to prove his case to his rustic hearers. There was less proof than this for the appearance of Daddy King's ghost in our lane near by, and nobody would dream of casting any doubt upon the story of its manifestation.

*Feb. 7.* I am rather ashamed to confess it, after my good advice to myself about crowding the greenhouse shelves through the winter with plants which do not bloom until spring, but one of my chief joys for the near future is a collection of pots of the lovely stock Mauve Beauty, which, from seed sown in July in five-inch pots, and thinned to four plants in each, is now a picture of colour as well as delightful in scent. And, after all, it was not for long that they occupied the stage before they began to show bud, for the winter was so mild that they had cold-frame treatment

until after Christmas, and are all the better for it. When they go out of flower they will be planted in the borders, and after they have recovered themselves a little they will begin again to bloom, and will continue decorative all through the summer. So I am able without much effort to persuade myself that it was right to grow them, for they give better and longer results than almost any other plants of my acquaintance.

Another thing which is at its best is the *spirea longifolia*, which also for a time received cold-frame treatment, and is now a mass of feathery whiteness. It will last in good condition in the drawing-room for six weeks or more, and is a great improvement on the older forms of this plant. My cyclamens are an unmitigated failure, as they never show a mass of blooms at one time, and although something may be attributed to incorrect treatment last summer, I am inclined to think that the corms are getting too old to give the best results, and I shall buy some fresh seedlings from a good strain next August.

Most persons are fond of dahlias and *salvia patens*, and it will soon be time to propagate these, if the stock is to be increased. If the roots are started in heat they will throw up cuttings which will be good flowering plants next summer. The old stools have been kept through the winter in the cellar. The gathering together of plants and bulbs from various places of safety in the spring, by a gardener who is short of glasshouse room, partakes of the nature of the prophetic gathering together of the dry bones of Scripture. They

come from all corners and nooks of vantage, from loft and shed and cellar and attic, and from beneath the greenhouse stage, and when the congestion of the house begins to be somewhat relieved they are given prominent places and made much of, as though they had never been ruthlessly condemned to exile; and they are so long-suffering and kind that they behave as though they had been treated in most generous fashion, and withhold none of their beauties for our punishment as they might so easily do.

If the *asparagus nanus* is required for cutting next winter, it should now be given a respite from the scissors, for it is throwing out new frond-spikes in abundance. When Sterculus first came to us he was quite ignorant of the culture of flowers, and for one or two winters I found that these new fronds were conspicuous by their reluctance to appear, as it seemed. It turned out that he had cut them off with the greatest assiduity and care as soon as they grew above the old foliage, thinking the twiggy growths untidy and obtrusive beyond their due. He is now sowing Marguerite carnations and Chinese pinks, which, as soon as they have germinated, will, if the weather permits, be moved to a cold frame, for it does not suit them to remain in heat after top growth has shown itself, or their constitution becomes weakened. The dianthus will fill gaps in the herbaceous borders for autumn blooming, while the carnations will occupy a reserve bed near the kitchen garden for cutting. Other seeds there are which have soon to be sown, such as petunias, tobaccos, verbenas, and marigolds;

and the propagation of chrysanthemums goes on apace, for the cuttings raised now will probably be our best when autumn comes. They will be good strong plants without a suspicion of drawing, for their treatment will be entirely on the cold system.

“February fill dyke  
Either with black or white.”

*Feb. 14.* So the old saw goes, and this year it is with deep white snow that our ditches are to be filled and our springs replenished. It has come suddenly, and the birds, misled by the winter's early mildness, have kept no store of berries to sustain them in days of famine. They come round the house in whirling crowds, begging for relief which is freely given them, and showing their gratitude by increasing confidence and friendliness. It is amusing to watch them every morning when the bird-table and tray have been laden with good things, and the giver has retired and left them to the feast.

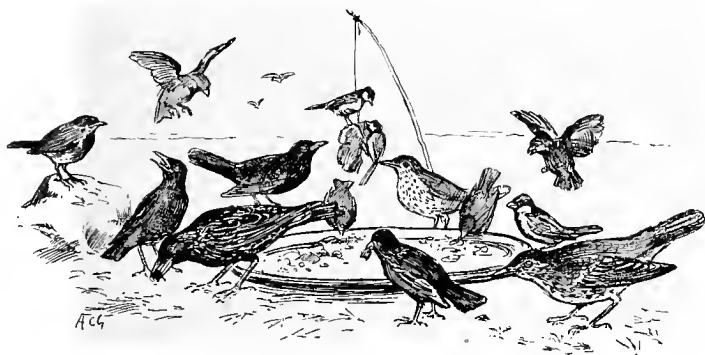
The table happens to be placed on part of the property belonging to the robin who lives under the elm tree, and he takes a proprietary interest in it apart from his appreciation of the food upon it. I believe that every robin in a garden has a portion of ground which he regards as his particular preserve. This is undoubtedly the case with our little birds. When crumbs are placed on the table the robin of the elm tree flies down to it, and walks round in a menacing way. Sparrows may come and eat, but no other robins may approach; if any is foolhardy enough to do so, he is driven away with vicious pecks and dashes. Presently,

when he has asserted himself in what he considers an adequate manner, the robin of the elm tree eats his breakfast and retires to his hiding place in the hedge, and the robins of the holly tree and of the apple tree are allowed to satisfy their natural craving for food. This routine is invariable, and the consequence is that the elm-tree bird has been fat and well-liking throughout the winter, while his poorer relatives have a seedy appearance, due partly to only half-appeased hunger, and partly to some loss of natural dignity arising through persecution. For the chief characteristic of the robin is personal pride and vainglory. He will not associate with robins in a walk of life different from his own. He loves the neighbourhood of human beings, whom, doubtless, he considers fit associates for his important little self, and I have known a robin who never failed to fly out from the hedge and welcome me whenever I came in from my daily walk. But other robins he dislikes and distrusts in the same way that an Englishman abroad dislikes and distrusts all Englishmen he meets, while holding out the hand of fellowship to persons of a nationality other than his own. "I hate to be mixed up with that holly-tree fellow," says the elm-tree robin as plainly as possible to his human friends; and the holly-tree fellow knows it well, and takes a small satisfaction by despising the apple-tree fellow who lives in the kitchen garden, and is in consequence a mere rustic, and of no account whatever in the more aristocratic circles of the robin world.

Before the smaller birds have finished their meal



there is audible a great fluttering of heavy wings, and the sentinel starling has brought his relations to the feast. The starlings have not packed this winter—nor indeed for the last three or four winters—but are still living in the neighbourhood of houses after their summer fashion. Doubtless they know better than we do when a mild season is coming, and will not trouble themselves to change their quarters except in times of necessity. They live in holes in the thatch, and sometimes on a mild January



THE MORNING FEAST

morning they choose to pretend that they are blackbirds, and wake us with a descant only a little less beautiful than the blackbird's note. When they fly down to their breakfast they do not disturb the sparrows; but the robins will not consent to eat in their company, and retire sullenly to their dens, whence their bright eyes watch the intruders in jealous impatience. Then the blackbirds hurry up at the last moment to get what remnants they can find; a tomtit or two and a bullfinch join them in nervous dread of the consequences, and a solitary thrush

hovers near to snatch the crumbs which the wasteful starlings have scattered far and wide. I believe it is said that the blackbirds are driving the thrushes out of gardens, and it is certainly true that every year the thrushes are fewer and their song is rarer. Probably within a measurable distance of time we shall make excursions into the fields to listen to them by day, as we do now to hear the nightingale on a warm night in May.

And lastly to the scene of the feast come the rooks, though not to eat. They circle high above the table, not daring to approach the house, and they perch in neighbouring trees, cawing mournfully for the joys which cannot be theirs. Sad it is to look into happiness through another bird's eyes, and this sadness seems ever the portion of the rook colony, which flies a long distance only to behold a feast devoured by lesser, bolder birds. But there are turnips yet to be had in the fields, and the winter will not be a long one, for the starlings have told us so ; and presently the rooks will have it all their own way, and will make the world noisy with their clamorous family life. For the twigs of the wych elms are big with purple knobs, and the earliest snowdrops are pushing bravely through the snow, and the honeysuckles are bursting into gay, green leaf, and the heart of Nature is throbbing beneath her winter garment. And presently she will awake from her long sleep, refreshed and ready for new efforts of beauty and tenderness ; and the flowers—her children—will lie in her lap, rejoicing because spring has given them life again.

Perhaps, after <sup>all</sup>, the portion of the watching

rooks is not all unhappiness or envy. Who knows that they do not take pleasure in the plenty of other birds more fortunate than themselves? Why should the best virtues be attributed only to the human, and denied to the lower animal creation? Happiness must always be beautiful to look on, wherever it may be.

Yet the happiness of those we love is so sacred that it may hardly be dwelt upon. Since yesterday it has been my part to dwell beneath the same roof with a man who indeed says nothing, or almost nothing, about a great felicity that is his after many days of anxious fear and hope, but whose joy-lit eyes betray his happiness. And Magdalen comes and whispers in a broken voice, and tells me how she loved him but feared that he would never speak, until a chance word, a touch unlooked for, swept away pride's barrier and loosed his tongue, and in a moment came paradise. Even one of life's onlookers may feel strangely moved at the sight of such happiness as theirs.



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